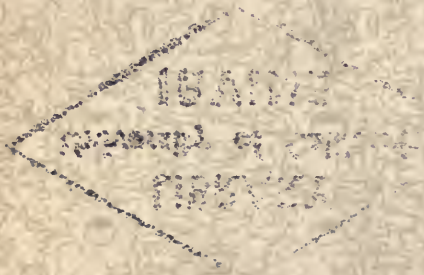

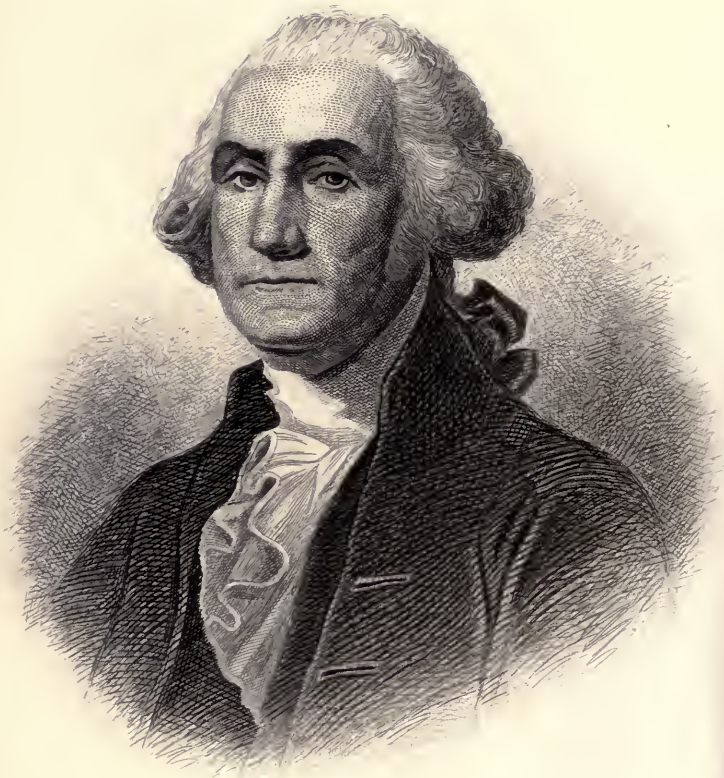

G. Washington

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LIFE OF WASHINGTON

BY

VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND

ILLUSTRATED

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To the millions who sit around the firesides of America, whose freedom he fought for, and whose liberties he won, this life of George Washington is dedicated, by its author.

PREFACE.

So many lives of George Washington have already been written that a new one perhaps requires some justification.

The character and deeds of the man who stands in the foreground of American history may be regarded from many sides.

The brief biography in these pages must, at the beginning, claim to be a woman's way of looking at George Washington.

In going over the familiar ground, the author believes she has entered some by-paths where she has gained a new view of the figure which stands in solitary majesty in the heart and imagination of the American people.

The author has also endeavored, while adhering strictly to the truths of history, to set the great scenes and crises in the career of Washington in

a picturesque and dramatic form before her readers.

The limits of this sketch do not, of course, admit of the broad lines and the grouping of stately figures with which other writers have filled their larger historic canvases.

To George Washington, when he reached the splendor of his power and greatness, his Virginia farm and his Mount Vernon fireside were the dearest objects of his ambitions and affections.

The author hopes that the real man, not only the great general, the wise statesman, but he who moved about that Virginia farm and sat at that Mount Vernon fireside, may live and breathe in these pages.

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George Washington

LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

SIXTEEN YEARS.

In an old family Bible—always a priceless heirloom in a Virginia household—many curious eyes have read this entry: "George Washington, son to Augustine, and Mary his wife, was born ye eleventh day of February 173½, about ten in the morning, and was baptized the 3d of April following."

In an ancient, one-story homestead, where the steep roof sloped down into low, overhanging eaves, and where

either end, according to the fashion of the time, was flanked by an immense chimney, George Washington first saw the light on the winter morning of February 22d (N. S.), 1732.

History has preserved for us the wide rejoicings, the gay pageants, the grand ceremonials, which greeted a good many births in the last century. The one which lies recorded in such quaint terms in the old family Bible must have made a very slight ripple on the surface of human affairs. There was no blazing of bonfires, no ringing of bells, no beating of drums, because a boy was born that day in the simple homestead on Bridge's Creek.

Mary, only a little while ago the beautiful belle of the Northern Neck, with "hair like flax, and cheeks like

May-blossoms," must have looked with a young mother's pride and joy into the eyes of her first-born; the father must have welcomed the goodly son of his second marriage, and the two boys of the first one, and the friends and neighbors of the quiet old colonial settlement, must have brought greetings and congratulations in the kindly fashion of a century and a half ago.

The child, whose beginnings were so simple, came of a stanch old English race. Its roots could easily be traced up to the century that succeeded the Norman Conquest. The heads of the family held estates and bore their part bravely in the fierce wars and the gay pageants of the time. Their names occur, in more or less varying forms, in old, yellow, time-worn records. One

who searches will find that those early Washingtons always made an honorable figure, and always played their part manfully in their time and place.

Loyalty seems to have been in their blood, for they held to the failing fortunes of the Stuarts, and one of them lost his life under the gallant, headlong Prince Rupert at the storming of Bristol. Then hard times befell. It is likely the Washingtons, like many other brave souls, had to pay dearly for their adhesion to that bad, lost cause. During the Protectorate two of the brothers emigrated to America, and settled themselves in the wild, beautiful country between the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers. Here the strong qualities of the race would be sure to make their mark. One of these English

brothers settled on Bridge's Creek, married, owned a large estate, became a magistrate, and one of the leading men of the colony. His descendants inherited and improved his estate, of which the old homestead, where his great-grandson, George Washington, was born, formed a part.

Not long after his birth the family changed their residence for one on the Rappahannock. The pleasant meadow which surrounded the house and stretched down to the river must have been among the earliest things in George Washington's memory. On this meadow, bordered by the brown, glancing river, he spent many days of his free, happy boyhood. One fancies him, always tall and stalwart for his years, running and shouting amid the

tall green grass, chasing the butterflies through the red clover and wild daisies; watching with grave, blue, childish eyes the swift current of the Rappahannock; setting his toy canoes afloat on the stream; laying snares for squirrels and rabbits—a busy, swift-footed, keen-eyed boy, gaining in this free, wide, out-door life those tastes and habits which were to become the passion of his later years.

The material for a biography is, at this early period, rather scanty. The story of the hatchet and the cherry sapling, whether true or not, is singularly characteristic. It shows the strong impression which the sensitive conscience of the child must have made on those around him. Nobody would ever have thought of relating such a story in con-

nection with the boyhood of Napoleon Bonaparte.

George Washington had a singularly happy childhood in that old Westmoreland home, where the wide meadow sloped down to the river. He had been born into a good place. Those first years struck their roots into a simple, wholesome, vigorous life. We can imagine him, a shy, grave, slender-limbed boy, going to the "old field schoolhouse" where he learned to read and write, and acquired some rudimentary arithmetic. He had, too, the inestimable blessing of a sensible, high-minded mother. There was a good deal of the old Roman matron in the character of the Virginia planter's wife. Her oldest son inherited from her that dignity of presence and man-

ner which afterward made so profound an impression on all who came in contact with him. He was brought up in an atmosphere of great reserve and formality, and his early training left its mark on him throughout his life. Mrs. Washington exacted a deference from her sons in curious contrast with the freer habits of our own times. It is difficult to fancy that group of stalwart boys, with their young sister, ever sporting in wild merriment about the stately mother. They must have been early trained to habits of prompt, implicit obedience. Even after he had reached manhood it was Washington's habit to address his mother, in his letters, as "Honored Madam," an example which Young America has not thought it wise to follow.

Yet, with all her high notions of maternal authority, Mrs. Washington does not appear to have been a severe parent. It is doubtful whether there was a happier home on all the Western Continent in the second quarter of the last century than that low, steep-roofed Westmoreland cottage.

George Washington's early advantages were meager enough when compared with those of the present generation. But he had a home-training of more value than many books. His outdoor life, too, was admirably adapted to develop his health and the singularly keen perceptions with which nature had endowed him. Almost from infancy he showed a passionate love of all athletic sports, and a little later led his comrades in all those feats which taxed

their young strength and agility. Boys are keen judges of character. They were not long in learning there was one on whose word and innate sense of justice they could always rely. It became the custom to refer all their childish disputes to him for final settlement.

We can imagine the shy, silent boy, so brave and alert among his comrades, sitting in the long winter evenings in a corner of the great-mouthed chimney, and, while the huge blazing logs filled the low-ceiled room with ruddy light, drinking in the tales of his elders; stirring tales of wild beasts in the woods and Indian wars on the border. All his young blood must have been fired as he listened; but nobody dreamed what a *rôle* the silent boy in the corner was to take a little later in scenes like those whose recital charmed away the

long winter evenings in the old colonial farmhouses.

George was only seven years old when his half-brother Lawrence returned from England, where he had been sent, as the eldest son, to complete his education. This was a great event in the boy's life. Lawrence, trained and accomplished by foreign travel, study, and polished society, was fourteen years the senior of his brother. The youth and the boy became tenderly attached to each other. George had that immense admiration for Lawrence which a young, undeveloped boy often feels for an elder brother familiar with the world. He made the young Oxford graduate his model in all things. Lawrence was worthy of this affection and trust. He had the strong character, the high virtues, of his race. His example

must have been of infinite benefit to his young brother.

Indeed, the more one regards the early life of George Washington, the more one perceives how admirably it was adapted to the development and training of the man for the great part he was to play on the stage of the world.

That early home was not shadowed and chilled, like so many young lives of great men, by struggles with poverty and lack of sympathy. The boy who was growing up in the quiet colonial neighborhood, with the vast, solemn wildernesses of the New World all about him, was, no doubt, far happier than any prince at that day in the old one.

It is probable that the boy's first real acquaintance with grief was occasioned by the death of his father. At eleven

he could understand something of what that meant for himself, his widowed mother, his three young brothers and their sister. Happily, Lawrence was at home at this sad time. The young captain had long been absent with his regiment in the West Indies, under Admiral Vernon. His marriage with Anne Fairfax, which would insure his settling down on his share of the estate, had been on the eve of taking place, and was only delayed by the death of his father.

The widow and her young family were left with ample means. Her husband showed his estimation of her character by appointing her guardian of their children's property. She proved herself equal to that high trust, and to the heavy and varied responsibilities

which her husband's loss devolved on her.

Lawrence married the eldest daughter of the Fairfaxes and settled at his own home, which he named Mount Vernon, in remembrance of his old commander. The intimacy which now sprang up between George and the family of his sister-in-law was of great importance to the boy at this formative period of his life. The Fairfaxes were among the most influential people of the province. Polished and cultivated, with the habits and traditions they had brought from their ancient country-seat in Yorkshire, they represented much that was best and worthiest in the old colonial society. Their house at Belvoir, a few miles below Mount Vernon, was full of gay young people of both sexes, and it must have resem-

bled in its leading features an English country-house of the higher class, though this, probably, had something of the larger freedom and more robust life of the New World. Here came, to be almost one of the household in a little while, the blue-eyed, grave-faced, rather overgrown boy from the Rappahannock, keenly observant of all that was going on about him; a little shy, with a consciousness of awkward movements and rustic manners among all these well-bred people, and showing his best in the out-door feats and games, where he was sure to be the leader.

There seems to have been no thought on the part of the boy's relatives of sending him abroad and giving him the advantages which his elder brother had enjoyed. Perhaps the early tastes he

manifested had something to do with this. They were of the most practical kind, and the whole aim of his education was merely "to equip him for the ordinary business of life." He went to live a while with Augustine, his younger half-brother, and in the neighborhood was a school, to which he was sent, and which was at least an improvement on the old one.

So, in studies at school, and frequent visits at Mount Vernon and Belvoir, the years went by, and the grave, shy, silent boy reached his fourteenth birthday.

Then a longing to enter the navy took possession of him. The mother's disapproval was the only thing that stood in the way. This was at last overcome. Mrs. Washington was pre-

vailed on to give a reluctant consent. The midshipman's warrant was procured. The trunk was aboard the ship. Then the mother's heart failed her.

Thoughts of her boy's youth, of the long separation between them, of the hardships and perils before him, conquered the resolute woman. She again earnestly opposed his departure. That of course, ended the matter. George swallowed his disappointment—it must have been a bitter one at that age—and returned to school, where he continued for the next few years. He showed great delight in the study and practice of land-surveys. Whatever he did was done thoroughly. There was none of the haste and carelessness of youth in his work. His field-books, where he made his diagrams, and entered his

measurements and boundaries, were models in all respects. Order, promptness, exactness, were a part of his being.

The schooldays were pleasantly varied with frequent visits at Mount Vernon and Belvoir. At each of these places he enjoyed a refined and graceful family life, at a period when tastes are formed and impressions are most vivid.

One cannot restrain a smile over portions of that minute code of manners and morals. Yet what a true, earnest young soul shines through all the prim rules, the painstaking details! How resolute the boy was to do his best! How careful in all that concerned his morals and his manners!

He had been born in the Georgian age. He bore the name of its second

monarch. There was one subject which must have held a large place in the horizon of George Washington's boyhood. Little as we realize it now, it was the burning question of three decades with Great Britain and her provinces. On its decision hung the dearest interests of the colonies, their religion, their laws, their future. Would the long struggle between the House of Brunswick and the House of Stuart end at last for the German Elector or the Papist Pretender? Tremendous issues hung on the settlement of a question which every man must have felt was doubtful, until after the Battle of Culloden. This took place the summer that George Washington was thirteen years old. With what eager interest he must have drunk in the story of that battle,

when the first vessel brought the news across the summer seas! How his whole soul must have kindled with joy at tidings of the victory! How little that young boy dreamed then that he —the son of the Westmoreland planter —was fated, a few years later, to deal the House of Brunswick its heaviest blow!

Lord Fairfax, the tall, gaunt, eccentric old English nobleman, who, in his youth, had figured at courts and enjoyed every advantage of high birth and breeding, was at Belvoir. The old nobleman had a passion for hunting. In the midst of his horses and hounds he was always chasing the game to cover in the Virginia woods, with all the fiery eagerness with which, in his youth, he had followed the trail over

the Yorkshire moors. He found in the young schoolboy a companion after his own heart, as eager for the hounds, as bold in the saddle, as skilled in the chase. The woods afforded splendid sport. The two were always out hunting together. The old nobleman, with his Oxford training, his memories of courts, his stories of the Blues—the regiment of which he had been a member—his keen knowledge of men, learned to like and trust the boy who came on occasional visits to Belvoir.

CHAPTER II.

FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD.

At sixteen, George Washington no longer seemed a boy. His figure had shot up slender and tall, while his out-door life, his surveys, and his sports had laid the foundations of his splendid health. It is easy to imagine him at this period, with the down of early manhood upon his chin, with his clear, gray-blue, honest eyes, and his grave, noble, strongly marked features. I imagine him, too, a little formal in bearing and speech, not altogether self-possessed in a drawing-room, or likely to put young girls at their ease. He had no gift of small talk—none of the grace

and lightness of the mere carpet knight. The great moral qualities which were alike to impress friend and foe, the dignity of presence and bearing which, in later years, so often overawed those with whom he was brought into social relations, could, at this time, only have been dimly discerned by the most acute observer. In the proudest dream of his youth, too, that boy of sixteen had no prescience of his future greatness.

He probably, at this period, seemed to ordinary people a grave, quiet, unassuming youth, with nothing brilliant or striking on the surface. Those who knew him best must have felt that his strong love of justice, his keen sense of honor, and his perfect integrity were a fairer promise for his future than the most captivating graces of mind or

manner. They knew, too, what a fiery temper lurked under the modest bearing; and what wrath would flame out at any story of wrong or meanness or treachery.

Lord Fairfax gave a remarkable proof of his appreciation of young Washington at this juncture. The old nobleman held vast tracts of land from the Crown. They lay, largely unexplored, beyond the Blue Ridge. It must have astonished everybody when he suddenly proposed that the boy with whom he had hunted so many days in the Virginia woods should set out on a survey of these lands. The offer was eagerly accepted. From that hour we hear no more of George Washington's schooldays.

He set out at once, accompanied by

one of the young Fairfaxes. They went through a pass in the Blue Ridge and entered the beautiful Valley of the Shenandoah. They camped in the woods; they lived on game. The hardy, adventurous life suited Washington admirably. He surveyed wide tracts among the mountains and about the South Potomac; he was absent some weeks; his work, on his return, gave the amplest satisfaction to Lord Fairfax.

The old nobleman's influence probably secured young Washington's appointment soon afterward as public surveyor. He spent the next three years in this congenial work. He lived much of the time in the wildernesses and in the wild, varied, unexplored country beyond the Blue Ridge. It was a splendid training for him. What a mercy it was

that nobody thought of sending him at this period to Oxford, to waste his stalwart youth in class-recitations and dim college libraries! The years that awaited him held tasks heavier than had ever fallen to human lot; and for these he needed the trained eye, that took in everything with a lightning glance; he needed the iron nerves, that no hail of bullets, no war-whoop of savages, could shake; and he needed a frame seasoned by sun and tempest, by exposure and hardship, until it seemed to have the fiber of some mighty oak of the forest.

With his swift temper and his strong will, George Washington was not likely to be always a saint in those days. But so far as we know, he was singularly free from the follies and vices of youth. He

led a happy, busy life at this period. The rough experiences of the wildernesses were alternated with visits to Belvoir, where the refining social and educational influences of his boyhood could still maintain their ascendency. He returned here to follow the hounds once more with Lord Fairfax, to read in the old nobleman's library the *Spectator* and English history, and to visit his favorite brother at Mount Vernon. During these days he must have grown familiar with the lives of the greatest of England's patriots and statesmen. His soul must have been fired with the histories of Eliot and Pym, of Hampden and Milton. The young Westmoreland surveyor was yet to prove that he too belonged to that mighty breed of heroes. How little he dreamed—that manly, modest

youth—as he pored over those records of daring and self-sacrifice and life-long patriotism, that his name was to rank in history among the noblest of those whose lives he was drinking in with such ardor in his brief vacations!

During these years the great question on which hung the future of North America was coming to the front. It could not, in the nature of things, be otherwise. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had left the English and French boundaries on the Western Continent an open question. Each nation laid absolute claim to the vast territories beyond the Alleghanies. Each, too, no doubt felt its claim to be the supreme one. Each was eager to occupy the land in advance, and thus establish the right of possession.

The French claim was, no doubt, a strong one. Their explorers and missionaries had penetrated far beyond any others into the vast western wildernesses, and they insisted on their double right of discovery and possession. They had scattered forts and outposts in this immense region, and they were bent on uniting Canada by a long chain of forts with Louisiana.

This resolution brought the two nations into direct antagonism. If the French claims were once admitted, the future development of the English colonists would be confined to the narrow area between the Atlantic and the Alleghanies. The great continent which stretched to the West, and which the Americans had long regarded as the fair heritage of their descendants, would

become the home of an alien and hostile race.

The young nation, settled sparsely along the sea-board, had strong instincts of the splendid career that lay before her. That vast, unexplored, inland world would afford the fitting field on which her untried energies could freely expand. It was of transcendent importance to secure the ground at once. The English colonists met the French claims by boldly insisting on their prior ones. They declared that "when they had established a settlement on the eastern coasts of America their rights extended in the same latitude from sea to sea," and they now demanded the cession of the coasts of the Bay of Fundy, and the destruction of every French fort in the territory.

At this time there was not a single white settlement in all the great world beyond the Alleghanies. But a company, among whom Washington's elder brothers were prominent, had obtained from the Crown a grant of immense tracts in the Ohio Valley. Their purpose was to occupy the land at once with settlements and garrisons. Here, again, the French had forestalled them. Their posts were already planted, their roads laid out in the disputed territory.

This encroachment was not to be borne. The English company resolved to eject the intruders by peaceful ways, if possible; if not, by the old stern one of battle.

A sudden war spirit spread through the colonies. Everybody felt that the

enemy must be at once driven out of their strongholds. The militia were put in training. Washington shared the popular feeling. He had early given evidence that he inherited the martial spirit of his race. In his childhood "he liked to make soldiers of his schoolmates. They had their mimic parades, reviews, and sham fights under him." All this, probably, had gone on in that old, green, wild-daisied meadow which bordered the Rappahannock.

George was eighteen now. It should always be borne in mind that, with his tall form, strong and erect as a young oak, with his grave features, his reserved, manly bearing, he gave an impression of being considerably older than he was. Stirred by the talk and example all about him, he took lessons

in fencing also, and practiced for a while with immense ardor.

At this juncture, however, Lawrence's health, which had always been delicate, broke down. He had desired to procure for his young brother a major's commission, but all these plans had now to be deferred. The physicians insisted on change of air, and at their advice the brothers, so strongly attached to each other, sailed for Barbadoes in September, 1751. This was the only time that George Washington ever set foot on any soil but his native one.

The novel world, the mild climate, the quiet life, all had varied attractions until the younger of the travelers had a severe attack of small-pox. The illness lasted for about three weeks. He always retained some slight marks of it.

On his recovery, George Washington went to a theater. It must have formed a memorable event in his life, for he had never visited one before. It was afterward observed that he always showed a decided taste for the drama.

No change of climate could avert the doom that was hanging over Lawrence. With that restlessness which accompanies pulmonary disease, he resolved to seek Bermuda in the early spring. George left him and returned home, intending to rejoin his brother with his sister-in-law. But all these plans were put to flight by the sudden appearance of Lawrence, who barely reached Mount Vernon to die there.

He left a large estate. Its management now devolved almost entirely on George. The property was to revert to

him in case Lawrence's only daughter should die without heirs. The months that followed must have been crowded with varied tasks and heavy responsibilities for a youth who had hardly reached his majority. Heavier ones, however, were soon to follow.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG HOPE OF VIRGINIA.

Governor Dinwiddie, of Virginia, was looking about for the right person to send on a mission to the outposts of the French and the wigwams of the Indians. The white men were using every art to draw the western tribes into an alliance. The mission would be of immense importance to the colonies. It required a man of varied qualities—cool, hardy, of tried courage and great sagacity. He would have to deal with the wily French commanders of the garrisons; with the treacherous savages of the frontiers. He would take his life in his hands.

George Washington was finally chosen for an expedition whose delicacy and danger required such a varied equipment. It was characteristic that he set off the very day that he received his credentials. He was twenty-two at that time.

The whole story of the journey reads like a romance. It is not possible to tell it within the limits of this sketch. It was slow, toilsome traveling by the swollen rivers, through the solitary wildernesses. The little party which accompanied Washington was composed of an Indian interpreter, several hardy frontiersmen, and Christopher Gist, an intrepid pioneer, who had a long acquaintance with Indian character and life.

Under the lowering November sky,

they pushed on to Logstown. The winter had come early that year. Fierce storms made the way through the wild country almost impassable. But they reached the Indian quarters at last, and, after various delays, held the council on which so much depended. Washington conducted himself at this juncture with great tact and discretion. His experience with the Indians in his government surveys must have served him immensely now. The young white man succeeded in gaining the confidence of the savages. They offered him the sacred pledge of wampum; they declared him and his people their brothers; they promised to resist all the efforts of the French to draw them into a treaty; and, at his own request, they agreed to furnish him with an

escort to Venango—the headquarters of the enemy.

Another long journey of seventy miles through the wilderness followed. Bitter weather, fierce tempests, and heavy snows combined to make the way long and perilous. At last, on the 4th of December, 1753, the tired party caught sight of the French colors flying at the lonely outpost of Venango. They were, to George Washington, the unwelcome sign of the intruder and foe. How little he could dream that a day—still in far distant years—was coming when those colors would fly for him at the masthead, and move in closest alliance with his own to the battle!

The travel-worn party was received and entertained with a rough hospitality. Washington, however, soon per-

ceived that secret efforts were on foot to detach his Indian allies from their allegiance to the English. They were welcomed at headquarters with open arms, and plied with liquor; and the whole party was detained at Venango by every conceivable stratagem. But Washington at last succeeded in getting off with his sachems.

Four more days of bitter travel through the winter wildernesses brought them to the fort on French Creek, fifteen miles from Lake Erie. Here Washington and his interpreter were received with great military form at the gate, and conducted to the officer in command, an ancient, silver-haired chevalier, who united the bearing of the soldier to all the grace and ceremony of the old French school.

Nothing could exceed the courtesy of Washington's reception. He announced his errand, delivered the governor's messages and papers, and, with his native frankness, would have entered at once on the business which had brought him, in the depths of the winter, to the fort on French Creek. But the chevalier politely declined to receive the documents in the absence of his superior, who was hourly expected from the next post.

On the arrival of the captain, the formalities of presentation were again gone through with, and the officers held a private council over the Governor's complaints and covert threats in case the French did not peaceably evacuate the territory into which they had forced themselves.

Washington was not, of course, admitted to the conference. But the next two days were consumed in private councils. The young Virginian had evidently thrust his head into the lion's mouth. He had now to match himself with veterans well-seasoned in all the arts and diplomacy of French camps and courts. It was, doubtless, in his disfavor that he could not speak a word of their tongue. "But he made the most of his time. He took notes of the plan, dimensions, and strength of the fort, and of everything about it; he gave orders to his people also to take an exact account of the canoes already at hand, and of those that were being constructed, to carry troops down the river in the spring." Nothing seems to have escaped his keen, trained

observation. But though he was treated—so far as appears—with unvarying courtesy during his whole stay, he saw clearly that subtle schemes were at work to undermine his influence with the savages and to retard his movements. When it came to any discussion of business, his questions were evaded, his remonstrances unheeded. He could get no satisfaction from these people, with their polished manners and their slippery talk. At that lonely outpost, surrounded by foes, in the midst of intrigues, he was filled with distrust and anxiety. Here again, as before, the sachems of the party were plied with liquor. In order to detain them awhile at the fort, a promise of guns was held out to them—an irresistible temptation to savages.

Washington's coolness and resolution, at this crisis, barely extricated his party from the toils of the enemy. The chevalier at last delivered a sealed reply to the governor's letter. The Indians, bent on receiving their guns, besought him to delay his departure until the next morning. He consented at last. The French were obliged to keep their word and deliver their presents at the time appointed, after which the little company embarked in their frail canoes on French Creek. The stream was swollen, turbid, and full of ice. The navigation was so dangerous that it was five or six days before the travelers once more caught sight of the French colors floating triumphantly at Venango. Here Washington was forced to part from his Indians for a day or

two, as one of the chiefs had met with an accident. The young commander had thus far maintained his ascendency over his savage allies, but he naturally feared the result of French influence in his absence. The circumstances, however, would not admit of delay, and on the 25th of December he and his little party of white men set out for home. The wonder was that he ever lived to tell the tale of that winter journey. Even the pack-horses broke down amid the terrible hardships of the frozen wilderness. Washington was forced to dismount and make his way as he could through the hurtling tempests and the heavy snows. At last he and Gist strapped their packs on their backs, took their guns, and, leaving the jaded men and beasts to make their slower

progress, struck bravely into the ice-bound forests.

Here new perils awaited them. They feared that Indians, incited by the French, were lurking on their path. At a settlement where they stopped, and which bore the inauspicious name of Murdering Town, they engaged a guide, as the travelers were wholly unacquainted with the trackless wilds through which they must pass. Though he seemed eager for the work, "took Washington's pack upon his back," and insisted that he had chosen the most direct course, Gist's suspicions were soon aroused. The veteran backwoodsman was used to the ways of Indians. He feared this one was playing them false.

After they had proceeded a number

of miles through the forest, Washington's strength gave out. Anxiety may have had something to do with this, for he shared his companion's suspicions. The Indian grew sullen. At last, when they reached an opening in the woods, where he had contrived to be some distance in advance, he suddenly turned and fired on the white men. His aim, happily, missed both.

They were not altogether unprepared. Gist, accustomed to the stern vengeance of the frontier, would have put the Indian to death on the spot. But his companion, whose young wrath one would suspect would naturally be roused to swift vengeance, now interposed to spare the savage's life, and Gist reluctantly consented.

The guide pretended that his gun

had gone off by accident. The travelers thought it the best policy to accept his explanation and permit him to depart to his cabin. Conscious of the peril of remaining in his vicinity, they pushed on through the long, bitter night and the whole of the next day, not knowing but any instant the terrible war-whoop, the brandished tomahawk, might bring them to bay.

They reached the Alleghany to find the great river filled with masses of drifting ice. A day was spent in making a rude raft that would enable them to cross. It was launched after sunset. The strong current swept Washington off the logs into the water. It seemed for the moment that all was over, and that the brave young life which the savage's aim had missed, and the winter

tempests and the snow-bound wilder-nesses had spared, would be swallowed up in the cold, hurrying waters. But with a last effort Washington caught at one of the raft-logs, and barely saved himself from drowning.

The raft, partly guided by their poles, drifted to a low island in the river, where the half-frozen men managed to land, and watch out the terrible night. The next morning they succeeded in picking their way over the closely packed ice to the river-bank. That night they reached the house of one of the frontiersmen who traded with the Indians. Under this rude, hospitable roof their perils were over.

Two weeks later Washington laid the letter of the French commander before Governor Dinwiddie. The great quali-

ties which the young officer had displayed in this mission, the coolness, the sagacity, the consummate tact with which he had dealt with shrewd Frenchman and wily Indian, the courage with which he had carried himself through all the varied perils which had beset him, made a vivid impression throughout the province. "From that moment," we read, "he was the rising hope of Virginia."

CHAPTER IV.

WINNING HIS SPURS.

THE troubles on the frontier thickened. It was evident there was no way of settling them but the old, hard one of battle. Forces were raised in the province, and the command of the little army was offered to Washington. It was like his native modesty to decline so heavy a responsibility, and he was accordingly appointed second in command.

It would take long to tell how the mistakes, delays, and obstinacies of others, on whom he was forced to depend, tried his soul and half-paralyzed his utmost energies. He could not

know how all these vexations and failures—so hard for youth to bear—were training him for the great work which would not begin for him until he had reached the prime of his years.

On a rainy May morning of the year 1754, the first gun was fired in the long struggle for possession of the Valley of the Ohio. We all know that Washington was in this battle; that Jumonville, the young French commander, was killed; we know that the Americans won the day, and sent home twenty-one prisoners to the colony. This battle roused all the instincts of the soldier. "I heard the bullets whistle," Washington wrote to his brother, in the flush of that first victory, "and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound."

This speech — so Horace Walpole relates — was afterward repeated to George II. "He would not say so, if he had been used to hear many," was the king's significant comment.

He, at least, could speak from experience. The second of the monarchs whom the House of Brunswick had given to England had the passion, the obstinacy, and the coarseness of his race; but he had its virtues also; and among these was the valor he had proved on the great battle-fields of Oudenarde and Dettingen.

Many years afterward, somebody had the curiosity to ask Washington if he had ever written those words to his brother. "If I said so," was the reply, that at once explained and excused a speech so unlike himself, "I was very young."

But that natural elation over his first victory was followed by days of cruel disappointment, severe hardships, and hopes deferred. The young commander had soon to face another side of war than that swift whistling of bullets which had roused all his martial instincts. Patience, fortitude, forbearance, were qualities which he was called to exercise in the most trying situations. The incompetency, obstinacy, and jealousy of those under whom he served were at the bottom of his difficulties. In the early summer he found himself reduced to extremities. The supplies failed; the troops were starving. Even the Indians grew impatient and disgusted with remaining in the service of the white men.

Under such circumstances the end

could not fail to come swiftly. On the 1st of July, after a rapid and toilsome march in sultry weather, over rough roads, with half-famished troops, Washington drew up his small forces on the grassy plains of the Great Meadows. In the center of these stood a fort protected by trenches and palisades, and which Washington, with a grim humor, had named "Fort Necessity—because of the pinching famine which had prevailed during its construction."

The retreat had not taken place an hour too soon. A brother-in-law of the young Jumonville who had been shot in that memorable skirmish which opened the long contest, Captain de Villiers by name, was in pursuit of Washington with a large force of French and Indians, eager to avenge the death of his relative.

A deserter had brought the French Captain intelligence of Washington's encampment at Great Meadows, and of the famished condition of the troops.

Washington meanwhile had made the most of his time. He had endeavored to enlarge and strengthen Fort Necessity. He had worked with his men, sharing their heaviest labors, "felling the trees, and rolling up the trunks to form a breastwork." He must sometimes have smiled grimly to himself as he recalled his flush of triumph over his first victory. That had been followed by months which demanded the exercise of constant patience and the severest self-control—months filled with harassing cares and cruel disappointments.

At this critical juncture a fresh mis-

fortune occurred. Most of his Indian allies, disheartened by the near approach of an enemy greatly superior in numbers, deserted the white men.

Washington's courage held out against this accumulation of difficulties until on the morning of the 3d of July, when, as he was at work, with his half-starved troops, on the fort, a sentinel came in, wounded and bleeding. The enemy was at hand!

Washington drew up his men outside of the works, and awaited the onset. Before noon there was sharp firing of musketry among the trees on the rising ground that surround the Great Meadows, but the enemy were too remote to do any harm.

Washington was on the alert. He suspected an ambuscade. He ordered

his men to keep their posts, and not to fire a gun until the enemy should come in sight. The French still kept under cover, while their musketry rattled in the woods. At last, Washington ordered his jaded troops to fall back into the trenches, and fire whenever the foe ventured in sight. In this way the long summer day was spent in skirmishing between the two armies. Meanwhile, the rain poured in torrents into the trenches. The troops were half-drowned; many of the muskets became unfit for use.

It was eight o'clock at night when the French sent a request for a parley. Washington was at first reluctant to grant it. He knew the wiles of the foe, and feared this was only a ruse by which they intended to introduce a spy

inside the fort. But, while he hesitated, a second messenger arrived, requesting that an officer might be sent to treat, under a parole.

Washington was forced to accede. There was nothing to be done now but to surrender to the enemy, who had closed in on his starving troops with forces that it would be certain destruction to face in battle. The terms which the enemy offered were twice rejected. The third time the paper was read by a flaring candle, in a fast falling rain, where the dim light was with difficulty kept from going out, and, amid the blackness of the short summer night, the French terms were accepted.

The next morning the draggled little army marched out of its stronghold. They went bravely—those half-starved

men—with drums beating, and colors flying, and all the honors of war. Washington at last brought the small force of Virginia volunteers in safety to Wills' Creek, where they found ample provisions, which, by the most shameful negligence, had not been forwarded to them.

Here Washington left his troops to recover their strength, while he proceeded to Williamsburg to lay his military report before the governor.

A little later the young captain and his officers received the thanks of the House of Burgesses for their bravery and their gallant defense of their country.

But, grateful as this recognition of his services was to Washington, he knew that the old influences which had made

his campaign so disastrous were still at work, and that they would confuse and cripple all his future action.

Matters culminated at last when Governor Dinwiddie interfered in delicate questions of military rank. Washington's sensitive honor was deeply aggrieved when he learned that his colonel's commission would in future allow him neither rank nor emolument. He refused to retain an empty title. He immediately resigned his commission and returned home.

He settled at Mount Vernon—Lawrence's young daughter having recently died—and was soon absorbed in the cares of his estate, in superintending his mother's affairs, and in promoting the welfare of his young brothers and sister.

In the rural life and work so dear to

him the sense of his late wrongs and disasters would have been gradually superseded by other interests; but the march of events did not permit him to remain long in that congenial life.

CHAPTER V.

BRADDOCK'S BATTLE-FIELD.

In 1778, General Braddock came out from England. He was a brave officer, seasoned by long service, for he had been forty years in the Guards. He was by temperament and habit a martinet. His religion was military routine. He had one of those obstinate, inflexible natures, which can never adapt themselves to new surroundings and expedients. He would lead his troops to battle in rude American wildernesses, or to the wild warfare of an Indian ambush, in the same fashion that he would have paraded them in St. James's Park. He could not conceive

of carrying on a campaign in a new, unsettled country after any methods but those of the old continental battle-fields, with which he was so familiar.

Thoroughly brave and honorable, there was not, probably, an English general at that time less fitted to take command of an American army than the one which England now sent out as Commander-in-Chief to her Colonies.

At this period Washington was, as we have seen, absorbed in the care of his estates. His agricultural tastes were his strongest ones. Even in his youth they always contended with his military proclivities, and in later years became the one passion of his life.

But now the booming of cannon among the quiet shades of Mount Vernon, the stately ships of war on the

Potomac, the military stir and din all about him, roused the temper of the soldier. Washington grew eager to join Braddock's forces as a volunteer. He longed to witness a brilliant campaign, under the command of a famous general, with all the military equipment of the Old World at his command. This desire was not long in reaching the Commander - in - Chief. He, probably, heard on all sides praises of the young Virginia colonel. The latter was soon offered a position on the staff. The acceptance of this high honor would involve considerable expense, while no pay was attached to the position. But military ardor was now uppermost. Washington became one of General Braddock's aids-de-camp.

The army from over the seas moved

slowly through the summer weather. Encumbered by immense baggage-trains, and all sorts of superfluous stores, the troops toiled over rugged roads, that had first to be broken, through trackless wildernesses. Braddock, true to himself, held rigidly to all the military rules and ceremonials, so burdensome and superfluous under such novel conditions. He had no knowledge of the country, and no idea of the methods of wild bush-fighting, or of the habits of Indian warfare.

All attempts to enlighten him proved worse than futile. He would listen to no representations from those familiar with the country. Obstinate, and easily offended, he snubbed all those who attempted to give him the advice of which he stood in such need. He more than

once resented Washington's attempts to give him some information on matters of vital importance; but, during the long advance, circumstances so often proved the wisdom of the young aid-de-camp's advice, that the general finally condescended to act on it.

Washington was with the English army on the fatal day of July 9, 1755. He had been taken seriously ill on the march, but, though he suffered intensely, he had persisted in keeping at his post, until the general kindly interposed and forbade him to proceed.

Washington was left behind, a guard was assigned him, and he was placed in the care of Dr. Craik, the life-long physician and friend whose career and fame are so closely interwoven with Washington's.

Braddock's conduct on this occasion proves that, despite all his obstinacy and devotion to military punctilio, he was at bottom a kind-hearted man.

The moment when the young aid-de-camp watched the proud little army move off into the wilderness without him must have been a bitter one. But he hoped to be able to rejoin the forces in a couple of days. Braddock had pledged his word of honor that he should be allowed to witness the battle. So his eagerness had brought him in time to the front, almost at the risk of his life.

That day, which was to fill so many homes in England and America with mourning, opened fair on the banks of the Monongahela. What a picture of life and color and movement the whole

scene must have made, framed by the green, ancient woods! The soldiers, we read, were marshaled at sunrise, and seemed arrayed more for a *fête* than a battle. One sees it all—the gay scarlet uniforms, the brown water glancing in the sunlight, the bayonets flashing bright against the summer green, as the army moved proudly along to the "Grenadiers' March;" the colors flying, the drums beating, the fifes playing. It was a gallant sight—such as the New World had never witnessed. It made an impression on Washington that was never effaced. In after years, when he himself stood at the head of armies, he used to say that these troops, as they moved across the ford and along the river banks, the sunlight flashing on the scarlet lines and the

burnished steel, formed the most beautiful sight he ever beheld.

The Indians lay in wait along the line of march. These savage hordes were to make that day one of the saddest in early American history. They had been hovering on the track for days. They had chosen their time and place well. They were always sure to do that.

Suddenly, from behind trees and thickets, and in ravines, broke the terrible war-whoop. English soldiers had never heard that sound. The next moment a deadly fire burst from the forest.

Every schoolboy knows the story of Braddock's defeat. One cannot wonder that it came, sharp and sudden and terrible, as it did. Everything had been

badly managed. Nothing had been done to guard against a surprise. There was no foe to be met in honest warfare; there was only that fearful yelling, that terrible uproar, to be heard, while the constant firing from unseen hands laid low the flower of the army.

Washington—just from his sick-bed—rode calm and fearless amid the rain of the bullets. No war-whoop could shake his trained nerves, no Indian ambuscade take him by surprise. In the midst of the carnage—officers and men falling thick around him—he did all that man could to rally the troops, and retrieve the fortunes of the day.

He was a splendid mark for the foe. Many a gun in the forest was aimed at him, but each shot fell harmless as

though from magic armor. Years afterward, Washington met an old Indian sachem, who related the story of that day, and confessed that he and his comrades had frequently aimed their guns at him as he dashed, a conspicuous mark, into every part of the field. But, when no shot took effect, they gave up firing. The sachem and his band believed that the Great Spirit had given the young officer the charmed life that could not be lost in battle.

Had the soldiers heeded his orders—had they "raked the ravines with grape-shot"—the day, even then, might have been saved. But the bravest soldiers were paralyzed. They could have held their own against any foe in the field. The Indian rifle was leveled by

unseen hands in the shelter of the woods, while the yells of demons shook the air and unnerved the soldiers. In vain "Washington sprang from his horse, wheeled and pointed a field-piece toward the woods. His example could not inspire the men with courage. Not a platoon would quit the line of march; not a soldier scale the hill on the right, where the firing was heaviest."

The end came at last, in headlong flight. At sunset the broken lines fled along the banks of the Monongahela, a wreck of the proud army that had crossed the river in the morning, with drums beating and banners flying, eager for the fray, and sure of a swift victory over their French and Indian foe.

On the battle-field lay hundreds of

the dead and wounded. The enemy, busied there with scalping and plunder, did not long pursue the routed army.

Braddock, like his officers, had carried himself with consummate bravery throughout the dreadful scene. Horse after horse was killed under him, but he still remained in the thick of the battle, and when at last he fell, mortally wounded, it was with difficulty they could get him from the field, where he desired to die. He saw his mistake when it was too late to redeem it. In the long retreat, amid which the brave, obstinate, old soldier was tenderly guarded and cared for, he must have remembered his young aid's advice that he should throw out flanking parties, and be prepared for Indian ambuscades. If he

had heeded the warning he would not have lost the day.

General Braddock died four days later at Great Meadows, the scene of Washington's surrender. The dying soldier was very grateful for the attentions that soothed his last hours; in proof of which he bequeathed his young aid his favorite horse—a splendid animal — and Bishop, his faithful body-servant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KNIGHT SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE.

WASHINGTON reached Mount Vernon before that disastrous month had closed. His health had suffered greatly. But his country could not leave him time to recruit. The defeat of Braddock had filled the province with consternation. It had shaken that old faith in the invincibility of British troops, which was a part of the creed of every American. Bewildered alarm had taken the place of the old blind confidence. Less than three weeks after his return, George Washington was appointed commander of all the forces in the colony.

His mother now interposed. She had been accustomed to having her authority treated with the utmost deference, and perhaps did not fully realize that her son was now no longer the lad whose naval career she had once checked on its threshold. Her letters entreated him—her first-born—not to risk a life so precious in another of those savage frontier battles. But, with all his habitual deference to the maternal wishes, Washington could not, at this critical moment, suffer them to be paramount to the claims of his country. And on the 14th of September he repaired to Winchester, where he established his headquarters.

Vexing questions met him on the threshold of his new career. Parties arose and quarrels ensued, on matters

of rank and precedence, between the king's officers and those who held commissions from the colonial governors. All this struck at the basis of his own authority. Washington at last determined to refer these matters to General Shirley, at Boston, the Commander-in-Chief who had succeeded Braddock.

The journey, which began on February 4, 1756, forms a bright little episode in this harassing period. Washington was accompanied by his aid-de-camp and an officer of light horse. They made the long winter journey on horseback, with servants in livery, in the old Virginia style. The small party was in the heyday of youth and hope. They stopped in Philadelphia and New York, and no doubt the picturesque

little cavalcade made a brilliant impression on the society of the old colonial cities. For the first time Washington entered New England and beheld Boston—the busy, quaint, old commercial town by the bay—little dreaming of the part he was yet to play in her history.

The journey must have been full of novel experiences and social pleasures to the young colonel and his friends. To this period belongs the story of his acquaintance with Miss Mary Philipse, the beautiful sister-in-law of his friend, Beverly Robinson. He met the young lady on his return to New York, and there is no doubt that her varied charms produced a powerful impression on his fancy and heart.

Washington had all a brave soldier's

delight in the society of women. There was a great deal of the tender chivalry of the old knight, "without fear and without reproach," in his nature. But his busy life in American frontier wildernesses had afforded him little time or opportunity for the indulgence of any romance. The presence of this elegant woman had the added charm of novelty to one always susceptible to the graces of her sex. His admiration was no secret to anybody who saw them together. There seems to be no doubt that Mary Philipse—the New York belle of that winter of 1756—would have had another suitor for her hand had Washington remained longer in the city. But at the critical moment he was summoned to Virginia, and, a little later, Captain Morris—his aid-de-camp

in the Braddock campaign—made the most of his time, and won the heart, hand, and fortune of the young woman.

Whatever disappointment Washington may have felt, he took it philosophically. He was, at this time, in the midst of scenes likely to dissipate all soft memories and regrets. A terrible panic had seized the country about him. The Indians were ravaging the frontiers. This meant burning houses and slaughtering families. The white settlers were flying in wild terror before them. That fair Valley of the Shenandoah—its pleasant homes wasted by the savage—was now one wide scene of havoc and desolation. It seemed on the point of relapsing into the primitive wilderness from which civilization and industry had rescued it—about to be-

come again the hunting-ground of the Indian, the haunt of the wild beast.

On his arrival at Winchester, Washington found the inhabitants frantic with fear. Every hour brought its fresh tale —true or false—of families massacred, or besieged and famishing in the stockaded forts, to which they had fled for shelter. The people were in agonies of terror lest the savages were on their way to attack the town. The helpless inhabitants—their imaginations inflamed by the belief of their imminent peril—lived over all the horrors of an Indian massacre, from the first paralyzing war-whoop to the last scene of scalped bodies and burning homes. In this extremity they turned to Washington as their sole hope and defender. Women gathered about him, "holding up their

children, and imploring him with tears and cries to save them from the savages. He looked around him on the suppliant crowd, with a countenance beaming with pity, and a heart wrung with anguish."

Washington's position, at this time, "shut up in a frontier town, destitute of forces, surrounded by savage foes," was one replete with anxiety and trial. It might have shaken the nerves of a veteran commander, and he was a young man of only twenty-four.

But he acted with his usual prompt energy. The first thing to be done was to lay the condition of affairs before the governor. His letter must have had something of the effect of a thunderbolt, for Dinwiddie, usually so dilatory and confused in his movements,

instantly dispatched orders for militia from the upper counties to march to Washington's assistance. Happily, the danger was averted. The Indians went away to their hunting-grounds with captives and spoils, and Winchester was spared.

As time went on, all sorts of delays, vexations, and interferences fretted Washington's ardent spirit, and wore on his health. It is a miserable story, on the details of which the limits of this volume make it impossible to dwell. The governor, narrow, obstinate, and soured, because Washington had been elevated to the command in preference to a favorite of his own, exercised a petty tyranny over all the young officer's movements. The latter often found his suggestions unheeded or imperfectly carried out.

His statements met with indefinite and ambiguous replies. Nothing could have been more irritating to a mind of George Washington's clear, practical quality than the lax, confused methods of his superior.

The unpleasant relations which continued to exist between the two were, no doubt, aggravated by the governor's character, which was one singularly liable to relapse into doubt and indecision at critical moments. He was easily offended, too; impatient of contradiction, he was even absurd enough to make complaints regarding the manner of his subordinate's correspondence. A little Scottish faction, intent on disgusting Washington, so that he would resign and make room for his rival, added fresh fuel to the governor's hostility.

It was in defiance of all the young colonel's remonstrances that Dinwiddie insisted on making headquarters at Fort Cumberland, and, to strengthen this post, he ordered a withdrawal of the necessary troops and supplies from other forts and from Winchester. By this unwise movement he weakened the defenses of the frontier, and threw military affairs into infinite confusion, besides incurring enormous losses and expenses.

All these things must have made that year's service a bitter one to George Washington. He had the ardent spirit of his years, for they were, as we have seen, only twenty-four. He had the fiery temper of his race. He could not look into the future and see how all these vexations and trials were training him in the long patience, the varied re-

sources, the steady courage with which he was yet to play his part on the world's stage—a part the greatest that had ever yet fallen to man.

But the year, that must have seemed so long in passing, was now drawing to a close. Frequent illnesses warned Washington that incessant care and anxiety were undermining his health. He struggled on for awhile; but the increasing violence of his attacks forced him to yield at last to the urgent solicitations of his friend, the army surgeon, Dr. Craik. Washington once more resigned his post and retired to Mount Vernon.

Governor Dinwiddie's administration came to a close with the opening of the new year, and he returned to England.

For some months after Washington's

return to Mount Vernon, the condition of his health seriously alarmed his friends. But the splendid forces of his constitution at last rallied, and tided him over the danger. He did not, however, resume his command at Winchester until the following April. He did so under brightening auspices. The new governor had not arrived from England, but his representative appreciated Washington's character and services, and was ready to aid him in all his plans.

Of more importance than all else, William Pitt was now at the head of the British Cabinet. The American campaign felt at once the inspiration of his genius. Parliament had resolved to carry on the war in the colonies with new vigor. Large supplies were to be

forwarded from England. The old question of rank between the king's and the provincial officers, which had been the occasion of so much bitter feeling, was, by Pitt's wisdom and tact, happily settled.

This must have been a source of great satisfaction to Washington. The year before he had made that long winter's journey to Boston in the hope of obtaining a king's commission. He had been disappointed. Before he returned to Mount Vernon he had made a last fruitless effort for the prize his services had so richly earned, and which would have established his authority on a secure basis. It is a curious fact, however, that George Washington was destined never to hold a king's commission.

The young commander gathered his scattered forces at Winchester and diligently disciplined the recruits. They were about nine hundred strong. They were destitute of nearly all the equipment necessary for an army. His letters to his superiors made forcible representations of the condition of the Virginia troops, but without producing the desired effect. He at last, however, received orders to repair to Williamsburg and lay the case in person before the Council.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVER AND SOLDIER.

WASHINGTON, with his habitual promptness, started for the old county-town of Williamsburg. Bishop, the long-trained military servant who had been the dying bequest of General Braddock, accompanied his master.

How little the young officer, burdened with military cares and responsibilities, dreamed that the journey from Winchester to Williamsburg was to be the most eventful of his life! The story of that day sheds over those stern times a sudden glow of romance. It broke across Washington's life in the most undreamed-of way, when the

soldier's heart and brain were absorbed in thoughts and cares for his country. But that brief interlude of romance was to make the joy and content of all the years to come.

Washington had crossed the Pamunkey—a small branch of the York River—and was spurring his horse ahead, when he was accosted by Mr. Chamberlayne, the proprietor of the grounds on which he had landed, who now insisted on his stopping to dinner. Washington declined, feeling it impossible to spare the precious moments. But the other would take no refusal. There was company at the house that day, among whom was the beautiful young widow, Martha Parke Custis, of whose charms Washington could not have failed to hear, though there seems to be no

record of his having met her before. Mr. Chamberlayne announced the presence of the lady as a fresh inducement for Washington to pause. It is likely that this fact turned the scale, for the latter at last consented to dismount, and, a little later, the host had the pleasure of introducing the young officer to the guests assembled under the hospitable roof.

The young widow whom he met at the gay little dinner party, must have been very charming at that period. We all know what a beautiful old woman she made. She was about three months younger than Washington, who was now twenty-six. Her figure was small and graceful. Her eyes and hair were of dark hazel. The world is familiar with that delicate, refined,

womanly face. It is precisely the sort of one we could imagine looking down on us from amid a gallery of ancient portraits, with bearded knights and fair women, in some old English castle. Mrs. Custis, like Washington, had come of one of the ancient families of the proud old colony. She had, like him, moved in its highest social life, and been nurtured amid its habits and traditions.

The young widow had been left with a large fortune, which she shared with her two children—a boy and girl.

Washington's heart—so the story runs—was taken by surprise. With the bright hazel eyes shining upon him, the dinner hour passed like a happy dream. With all his gallant feeling for woman,

his bearing toward her was, like himself, serious and dignified. Perhaps it never lost a touch of the ceremonious formality in which he had been reared. Yet his handsome presence and his grave, courteous manner must have had a great attraction for the women whose charmed circle he occasionally entered.

Bishop, with his long training under General Braddock, was not likely to fail in punctuality. He was at the door with the horses on the moment. But for once their owner "loitered in the path of duty." Nothing affords stronger evidence of the impression that Martha Custis had made on George Washington, than the fact that the remainder of the day was passed in her society. The restive horses pawed in vain at the

door. Washington had resolved to ride during the night to make up for the lost hours. But the soft spell that held him was too powerful to be broken. At last the order to depart was countermanded. Bishop must have been immensely astonished as he led the horses back to their stalls. His master spent the night under Mr. Chamberlayne's roof. The next morning Washington once more started for Williamsburg.

But the brave heart had never beat so high, and softer moods must have mingled with the young soldier's thoughts of camp and battle-field, as he spurred along the ancient Virginia turnpikes. That halt for dinner had been his fate.

The remainder of the story must be told briefly. The young commander,

who had won his laurels so early, and whose praise was on many lips, had made a deep impression on the woman he was so eager to win. Fortune, in this instance, was kind to him. Mrs. Custis's home was in the vicinity of Williamsburg. Washington must have met her frequently during the brief stay that military affairs permitted him. In their case nothing ruffled the course of true love. The crowding war duties that summoned him back to Winchester allowed brief time for courtship. He had a lover's fear lest, in his absence, another should supplant him, and win the prize he coveted. Matters appear to have been arranged with a kind of soldier-like promptness and decision between the pair. At all events the suitor was successful. Before he left Will-

iamsburg, Martha Custis had promised George Washington she would be his wife, and it was settled that their marriage should take place at the close of the campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE AND MOUNT VERNON.

THE old familiar specters met Washington on his return to Winchester. An idle camp had produced its inevitable results. The troops had grown restless and wearied with the service. The neighborhood in which they were quartered, was offended by the frequent disturbances of the soldiers, and tired of the burden which their presence involved. At last Washington received the welcome order to break up camp and repair to Fort Cumberland.

One event, however, greatly lightened the trials of this summer. Washington was now no longer the ardent young

soldier whose heart had bounded at the whistling of the bullets. Military ambitions had ceased to influence him. He was looking forward eagerly to the close of the campaign, when he would resign his command and settle down at Mount Vernon with the woman of his choice.

With this purpose in view, he had become a candidate for election to the House of Burgesses. When the election came off at Williamsburg, his presence there was regarded by his friends as all-important for his political interests. But it was characteristic that he would not leave his command, even for a brief time, and though he had received leave of absence.

He had, too, during the encampment at Winchester, enforced martial law

with a good deal of rigor. His severity had sometimes endangered his popularity. Several other candidates were in the field. But the electors of Frederick County, by a large majority, chose George Washington for their representative.

The summer wore to its close. Washington, with his sickly, disheartened troops, was chafing in his camp at Fort Cumberland. He must often have asked himself, in bitterness of soul, if this was the brilliant campaign which had lured him from Mount Vernon, with the stately ships of war moving slowly along the Potomac, and the cannon booming among the peaceful groves!

A lover's impatience was now added to the man's longings to resign his commission and return to private life.

The soldier in him had had its brief day. With his nature and character, his delight in war would be certain to be a part only of his proud, aspiring youth. All his hopes and ambitions, as we have seen, centered now about the home to which he was looking forward with such passionate longings, and which must have grown doubly dear to him, when he thought of the beautiful woman who would one day be its mistress.

Meanwhile, in opposition to all his remonstrances, a military road was being toilsomely opened through the heart of Pennsylvania, from Raystown to Fort Duquesne. Sixteen hundred men were employed on this needless work, while vast expenses were incurred in its prosecution. But the British officers had

conceived a terrible idea of the old "Braddock Road," and the Pennsylvania traders, who had their own interests to serve, threw all their influence in favor of a new route through the province.

It must have been a happy day for Washington when he received orders to break up the camp at Fort Cumberland and move with his forces to Raystown, where the British Army was assembled under the command of General Forbes. The young Virginia colonel met with a most courteous reception, and found that his opinions had great weight with the Commander-in-Chief, both in private and in war councils.

Notwithstanding the vast bodies of men engaged during the summer in opening the road, they had only ad-

vanced forty-five miles. Fifty more through the primeval wilderness had yet to be penetrated before Duquesne would be reached. Meanwhile, a military post had been established at Loyalhanna by Colonel Bouquet. With a body of nearly two thousand men under his command, he was tempted to dispatch eight hundred into the enemy's country. An enterprise of this kind naturally possessed a strong attraction for the soldiers. Washington, familiar with the ground and the foe, used all his influence to defeat the expedition; but it was in vain. The idea of a dashing military exploit seized the imagination of the officers; and, having learned nothing from the terrible lessons of past Indian warfare, Major Grant set off into the wilderness at the

head of eight hundred picked soldiers. A part of this force was composed of Washington's Virginia regiment, "sent forward by him from Cumberland, under Major Lewis."

It was the old story of Braddock's defeat—on a smaller scale this time. Former experience had not made Major Grant wiser or more wary. With foolhardy recklessness he led his troops into the enemy's land. Again the soldiers found themselves in the fatal ambush; again the dreadful war-whoop filled the air. A fearful scene of rout and carnage followed. Fifty Virginians, familiar with Indian habits of fighting, were, happily, on the ground. They had been placed in charge of the baggage. They came now, under Captain Bullitt, to the rescue. The little company

formed a barricade with the wagons, rallied a part of the panic-stricken soldiers, gave a brief check to the enemy, gathered the fugitives, and made a rapid retreat. Grant and Lewis barely succeeded in saving their lives by surrender to a French officer.

Washington, at Raystown, learned the sad story which so amply justified his opposition to the enterprise. Bitterly as he must have felt the defeat, it could hardly have taken him by surprise. His old faith in the invincibility of British troops had, as we have seen, long since disappeared. The laurels those seasoned veterans had won on Continental battle-fields were doomed to wither fatally in American wildernesses and amid Indian ambuscades.

But the defeat only won fresh honors

for the Virginia troops, who had so bravely brought off the detachment at the critical moment. It must have been a proud day for their Colonel, when they received the public compliments of the British General. A little later Captain Bullitt was honored with a major's commission. The regular army was at last forced to acknowledge the valor of those provincial troops whom they had so long regarded with undisguised contempt.

Washington received fresh honors. He had now the command of a division "partly composed of his own men, which was to keep in advance of the main body, clear the roads, throw out scouting parties, and repel Indian attacks."

On the 5th of November the whole

army was at last assembled at Loyalhanna. With the winter close at hand, with fifty miles to traverse through the wilderness, it seemed that Washington's predictions were again to be fulfilled, and that another year's campaign was about to be brought to an ignoble close.

A council of war was held. It was decided that a further advance that season was impossible. At this critical moment, however, three prisoners were brought into camp. Their report of the condition of affairs at Fort Duquesne, of the desertion of the Indians, of the garrison, without hope of re-enforcements or supplies, fired the flagging courage of the council. It was at last resolved to push forward. The march was again resumed, and this

time, tardily taught by experience, "without tents or baggage, and with only a light train of artillery."

Washington still kept the advance. The road beyond Loyalhanna, strewn with human bones, afforded an eloquent commentary on the late methods of Indian warfare. That sad spectacle must have silenced the last voice that had been raised in opposition to Washington. But the army kept on unmolested in its mournful march through the November wilderness. The fifty miles were at last traversed, and Fort Duquesne rose in sight.

The army now advanced with every precaution. They anticipated a resolute defense; but they were disappointed. The French fort, so long the terror of the frontier, the object of so many

hopes and fears, and for which so much precious blood had been spilled, was doomed to fall at last without a blow!

An hour came which must have seemed to reward Washington for all the wrongs, toils, and perils he had undergone. On November 25, 1758, he marched with the advanced guard into Fort Duquesne, and planted the English colors where the French had waved so long. The enemy had departed the night before. They were reduced to extremities. No re-enforcements had appeared. The foe was within a day's march. "The French commander embarked his troops at night in bateaux, blew up his magazines, set fire to the fort, and retreated down the river by the light of the flames."

This closed the long struggle between

the French and English races for possession of the land beyond the Alleghanies. To-day, the busy, crowded city of Pittsburg stands on the old site of Fort Duquesne, and on the very spot where the checkered military career of George Washington seemed to have closed forever in victory.

At the end of that year Washington resigned his commission, and retired from the service. His health had been shaken by anxieties and hardships; but he had seen the grand object of long, struggling years attained. The "Old French War" was ended. Prosperity once more smiled upon his native province. The Indians at last submitted to their conquerors, and a treaty of peace had been concluded with all the tribes between the Ohio and the lakes.

Tidings of that victory must have thrilled the whole land. The old haunting terror had disappeared. There was a flash of joy on every face. The name of George Washington was to be forever associated with the hour of deliverance and thanksgiving.

He must have turned his back on the scenes of his late warfare with a heart full of unutterable gladness and gratitude. Mount Vernon was awaiting him. The fair face of the woman he was to wed, would welcome the victor with smiles. In her society, and amid the rest and quiet of his home, his health would rally again. The outlook must have been very fair to George Washington in those closing winter days of 1758.

On the 16th of the following January,

he and Martha Custis were married at the White House, near Williamsburg, the residence of the bride. The wedding was celebrated with all the gayety and lavish hospitality of the old colonial time, and its traditions floated down to later generations.

The three months that followed were spent by the newly-married pair in the bride's home, after which they repaired to Mount Vernon. Before they left Williamsburg, Washington had taken his seat in the House of Burgesses. An amusing little incident occurred on his installation. The members had secretly agreed that the young Colonel should be received among them with a signal mark of respect.

When he took his seat for the first time, the Speaker, who was a personal

friend of the new member, thanked him on behalf of the colony, in some glowing periods, for the splendid services which he had rendered his country.

Washington was quite overcome by this unexpected honor. He rose to reply; but the courage that had carried him undaunted through the storm of the bullets, the nerves that had held themselves calm amid the yells of the Indian ambuscade, failed the young hero now. He stood blushing, stammering, trembling before the House, and could not utter a word.

The Speaker came gracefully to his aid. "Sit down, Mr. Washington," he said. "Your modesty equals your valor, and that surpasses the power of any language I possess."

This little scene has a peculiar inter-

est, because it forms Washington's introduction to civil life. We can imagine the pride and amusement with which his newly wedded wife must have listened, a little later, to the story.

George Washington spent the next sixteen years at Mount Vernon. He now settled himself down to his place in life, and to fulfill, with his native conscientious thoroughness, the varied duties and responsibilities of a large landed proprietor.

The domain which he had inherited stretched fair and ample about him, with its noble groves, its vast woodlands—haunts of deer and foxes and wild game—its fields, ripening through the long summer into splendid harvests. The borders of the estate were washed by more than ten miles of tide-water.

The mansion stood on a height which commanded a magnificent view up and down the Potomac, and the grounds were laid out in the English fashion of those days. Here Washington lived his hospitable, busy, happy life. It does not seem possible that any man during the last century could have had sixteen years of pleasanter existence than those which fell to the proprietor of Mount Vernon. He had, of course, the superintendence of a large estate, and the inevitable cares and responsibilities which that involved. But the work was thoroughly congenial, and the burden lay lightly on that strong, energetic manhood. Business, too, was varied with pleasure—with visits to Annapolis, the gay little seat of the Maryland government; with dinners at home and

among the neighboring gentry. Washington's social instincts were strong. He was the most hospitable of hosts. His own personal tastes and habits were simple, but his position demanded, and his fortune justified, an ample and generous style of living. The old colonial society in which he moved, reflected a good deal of the ceremony, the pomp, the stately grace of the Old World. Washington's long intimacy with the Fairfaxes, his intercourse with British officers, must have had its influence upon his tastes. Mrs. Washington, no doubt, indulged her own. She had brought an ample fortune to Mount Vernon. She would naturally desire to live in a style befitting its mistress. Nobody familiar with her picture, and skillful at reading faces, can doubt that

she would enjoy the refinements and elegancies of life. Though her husband always appeared on horseback, she had her chariot and postilions in livery for her own use and for her guests.

Washington carried some of the old military habits into his home life. He rose early, and his simple breakfast of tea and Indian cakes could not have occupied many minutes. When the meal was over, he mounted his horse and rode over his estate, giving the most careful attention to its varied management, and taking part in the manual labor whenever that was necessary. He kept his own accounts, and balanced his books with the same exactness with which he had drawn up the social codes of his boyhood, and the surveyor's charts of his youth. If he

was a kind, he must have been also an exacting, master. Shiftless ways, careless work, would never long escape the keen, all-observant eyes; and, where the offense was voluntary, would be likely to meet with small indulgence. But nobody who had dealings with the proprietor of Mount Vernon ever had cause to question that high sense of justice which governed him in each relation of life.

When the hunting season came on, Washington's old passion for the chase was sure to revive. He was out several times each week with his neighbors and his hounds. The woods resounded with the shouts of the riders and the baying of the dogs. The hunt was followed by a grand dinner-party at some residence in the neighborhood.

Washington enjoyed a day like this immensely. It always brought out the social and jovial side of his character.

The Potomac also afforded him vast enjoyment, with the fishing in its waters and the hunting on its borders. There were seasons when the herring came up the river in vast shoals, and the servants mustered on the banks to draw in the seine, which must have been accomplished with much labor and fun. Then there were canvas-back ducks to be found among the reeds and bushes along the banks of the noble river.

As one dwells on the picture of those fair surroundings, of the happy, varied in-door and out-door life at Mount Vernon, it seems a good deal like reading some idyl of the poets.

To crown all the rest, Washington's domestic life was a very happy one. The wife he had chosen appears to have been remarkably adapted to a man of his tastes and temperament. The name of Martha Washington is dear to Americans. Had it not been for the long seven years' trial of the Revolution, the world would never have known what sort of woman reigned amid the elegant seclusion of Mount Vernon. She who, when the time came, left, uncomplainingly, that home of grace and ease, to endure the privations and hardships of the camp at Morristown and the terrible winter at Valley Forge, proved herself worthy of the immortal name she bears, and deserves her place in the grateful memory of a nation.

Those sixteen years have been truly called "the halcyon season of Washington's life." The busy, dignified, gracious master of Mount Vernon was not much given to poetic fancies. Yet it would not have been strange if, during those smooth, prosperous years, he had sometimes wondered what there was left to ask, had the ancient fable come true again, and the Fates brought to his door all honors and all fortunes for his choosing.

He may, it is true, have felt a regret that no children came to bear his name and prattle about his knee; but he showed for his wife's boy and girl the interest and tenderness of a father.

CHAPTER IX.

ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

It was impossible for a man like George Washington to be absorbed in interests and affections that were wholly personal. All the great questions which at that time were agitating Europe, and, more especially, the legislation of the mother country, her domestic and colonial policy, must have been charged with vital interest for him. The great statesmen of the England of his day—the ministers who made her government and shaped her history, during the middle of the century—must have been frequent subjects of discussion when the host and his guests rode over the

grounds or sat at the hospitable board of Mount Vernon.

Washington had been, like all the Virginia colonists, brought up in an atmosphere of intense loyalty to the mother country. England was home to them. They were proud of her power, of her high place among the nations of Europe. They regarded her glory as their own. We have seen that loyalty was in the fiber of the old Washington breed. The race qualities were strong in their American descendant. He had dreamed in his youth that he should some time visit England, and see the ancient cradle of his house; but the charms of Martha Custis and the cares of Mount Vernon, had prevented his carrying out the wish, until it was finally abandoned.

We have seen that there was one dread which, for thirty years, haunted the scant populations along the eastern seaboard of America. It was a dread which the New England Puritan and the Virginia planter alike shared with all Protestant England. Their common peril must have drawn the colonies in closer sympathy with the mother country. Crises came when the Pretender shook all Great Britain — when even George II., courageous with the courage of his hard old race, almost gave up everything for lost, and determined to die fighting valiantly in his palace for the crown and kingdom that the Stuarts had come back to claim.

Fourteen years after the battle of Culloden had forever settled the succession in favor of the Brunswick line,

George III. ascended the English throne. This event was the occasion of great rejoicings throughout the realm. The young sovereign, unlike the previous monarchs of his house, was a native of England. At the time of his accession he showed some qualities which touched the popular heart and imagination. People everywhere rang the changes on the purity, the piety, the filial character of the young King. He was yet to prove that his intellect was of the narrowest order; while his education, under his arbitrary mother, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, had unhappily strengthened all the defects of his character.

"George, be a King!" was the advice which she constantly rung in his ears through his childhood; and he

proved, through his long life, that the words had made an ineffaceable impression on a nature at once narrow, bigoted, and hopelessly obstinate. Indeed, his limited understanding and his lack of imagination, made it impossible for him to conceive that there could be any side of a question but the one which he approved. Nobody suspected, however, at the time of his accession, the lurking insanity which was to make the closing years of his reign almost as tragic as King Lear's.

No doubt the colonies shared in England's rejoicings, when a vessel brought the first tidings of the new reign to America. Bonfires probably blazed and bells rang, to emulate the celebrations three thousand miles away. How little anybody at that time could have fore-

seen that the new king's obstinacy and tyranny would, less than thirty years later, force his loyal colonies into the rebellion which was to separate them forever from his crown!

This is not the place to enter on the long chapter of colonial wrongs. It may be said here, however, that their history proves that America's affection for England never met with a response. This fact was largely due to the selfish commercial instincts of Great Britain. It was the interest of her manufactures and commerce to restrict and suppress the growth and independence of the young nation beyond the sea. England's legislation for America, inspired by the selfishness and jealousy of her commercial classes, was intolerably oppressive. Many of the industries of the

country were ruined; nearly all languished under restraints and prohibitions interposed solely for the benefit of Great Britain.

America, with her vast seaboard, saw her ports closed by navigation laws against foreign vessels. She was forced to carry her exports only to countries belonging to Great Britain. All her imports must be made from England and in English ships. Even the trade between one colony and another was hampered and prohibited in ways that now seem incredible.

A people whose instincts of freedom had been nourished alike by their history and traditions, and by the noble country which they were everywhere reclaiming from savage and wild beast, could not tamely submit to injustice and oppression.

America, with the prescience of her great future opening before her, was jealous for her liberties, and resolved to maintain them at any cost.

There was, consequently, no question on which the colonies were so sensitive as that of taxation. This, as they had no representation in the English Parliament, they regarded as slavery. Any attempt of the mother country to raise a revenue from colonial imports was certain to raise a storm among the people.

During the long, peaceful administration of Sir Robert Walpole, while the House of Brunswick held its insecure tenure of crown and kingdom, the delicate matter of colonial taxation was wisely kept in the background. But after the accession of George III., Par-

liament boldly affirmed its right to tax the colonies. Various duties were imposed, and the following year the hated Stamp Act was passed.

It was ominous that the first protest against the Stamp Act, should come from the old, aristocratic Province of Virginia. Her history, her traditions, the forms of her domestic and social life, naturally tended to bring the oldest of the colonies in closer sympathy than her younger sisters with the mother country.

Washington was in his seat in the House of Burgesses on that memorable May day when the young lawyer, Patrick Henry, made the immortal speech which to this day fires one's heart to read.

As Washington listened to that stern

arraignment of the English Government, that splendid defense of American liberties, his soul must have glowed with patriotic ardor.

His letters, after his return home, show the new trend of his thoughts, and the anxious outlook with which he was beginning to regard the future of his country. His pages are no longer filled with tranquil pictures of the happy life at Mount Vernon. A shadow, destined to deepen with every year, has fallen across the peaceful days.

Washington was a young man—only thirty-three—when he listened to that speech of Patrick Henry's, which rung like a tocsin throughout Virginia, and thrilled the heart of America. The dream of a last appeal to arms was still far off, but there were signs in the

times—there was a general feeling of suspicion and resentment in the very air —which no keen observer could fail to detect, and which must have given every lover of his country many a moment of anxious foreboding.

The repeal of the Stamp Act, in the following year, at first gave the country great satisfaction; but this was soon succeeded by fresh disappointment and indignation. A fatal clause was added to the repeal. England reaffirmed, in the strongest manner, her right to tax her colonies. A little later, fresh imposts on various articles of commerce, proved that she was bent on exercising, in the most arbitrary manner, the right she arrogated to herself.

The years which lie between the speech of Patrick Henry before the

Virginia House of Burgesses and the opening of the Revolution, are a well-trodden track of American history. Every schoolboy is familiar with that ground. Popular discontent and agitation continued to spread through the land. Fear and distrust of England slowly supplanted the old reverence and loyalty. The mother country laid her hand with heavier weight upon her colonies. More and more she began to assume the character of their oppressor and foe.

The consciousness that their common liberties were in peril, the conviction that their only hope must lie in an intimate union of interests and measures, drew the provinces closer together. The feeling of alienation and jealousy which, at the beginning, existed more or less

among them, slowly disappeared. The colonies agreed on retaliatory measures. A compact, that they would import no articles on which imposts had been laid, struck a blow at the heart of British commerce.

America had founded many hopes on the good-will which she believed the king must cherish toward her. But it began to be more and more evident that these hopes were futile. As the real character of the third monarch of the House of Brunswick came to the surface, he showed that his naturally arbitrary instincts were not held in check by an enlightened understanding. His faults had, as we have seen, been strengthened by his unfortunate training. Many of the traditions on which the youth of the future King of England had been

nurtured were despotic enough for the atmosphere about the cradle of Philip II. or of Louis XIV. With his character and his education it was impossible that George III. should be anything but the powerful, inveterate foe of American freedom.

During the decade which succeeded his accession, his popularity had greatly waned at home. The corruption and obsequiousness of the ministers and parasites with whom he surrounded himself, gradually estranged the loyalty of his people. It was impossible to disguise the fact that venality and subserviency were the real passports to the sovereign's favor. All the noblest sentiments, all the patriot instincts of the nation, were outraged by the character and measures of those on whom the monarch bestowed his

confidence, and to whom he confided the most precious interests and the highest offices of the state.

The wisest and best men of the nation, the men who had made the prosperity and glory of England at home and abroad, and who had inherited the spirit and teachings of Hampden and Pym, of Russell and Vane, were ignored at the court, while they beheld the nation burdened with taxes, to support the minions of the king. All this time it became more and more evident to the real statesmen of England, that a storm was brewing beyond the seas, and that the measures of the government to suppress the liberties and ruin the manufactures of America, would at last goad the colonies to desperation.

But other interests were, for a while,

lost sight of in the all-absorbing one of the Middlesex election, which shook England like an earthquake. The contest, whatever disguises of form and name it might take, was the old one between the liberties of the people and the prerogative of the king—a contest which had made the history of the seventeenth century lurid with civil wars, and ended at last by setting the House of Brunswick on the throne that the Stuarts had lost.

During the long battle of the Middlesex election, the name of John Wilkes became the most popular in England, and the letters of Junius held up, in the light of their terrible irony, the false policy of the king and the incapacity and shameless venality of his ministers. While the right of John Wilkes to his seat in the House of Commons, and the

arraignment of the government by Junius, were convulsing England, the long struggle must have been watched with eager interest across the seas, in the quiet home by the Potomac.

Though the owner had reached the prime of his years, his name was not one familiar to English lips. Far behind him now lay his stormy youth. Just before him a mightier storm was gathering.

Washington had been, during the years that brought him to middle life, a profoundly interested observer of the critical relations between England and America. His love of country was his deepest feeling. No purer flame of patriotism ever burned in the soul of ancient hero, than that which shone with calm, steady light in the heart of the simple Westmoreland planter. He was

to prove, when the time came, that no sacrifice of life or fortune, of home or happiness, would be too great for his country.

Deeply as he resented the conduct of England, he maintained, through this time that tried men's souls, his calmness of speech and attitude. Yet, as one high-handed measure of Parliament followed another, and revealed the temper of the government and its purpose to crush the young liberties of America, Washington could not conceal from himself the fact that there might come a day when his country would have no choice but the last appeal of freemen.

But this reflection was unutterably painful. Washington had the temperament with which old associations and habits are powerful. He had no delight

in the stormy atmosphere of revolutions and rebellions. He long clung to the hope that a better spirit would prevail in the counsels of those who held the destinies of America in their hands. He knew that she had wise and powerful friends in Parliament and near the throne. That consciousness must have given him courage in many a dark hour. He must have felt a terrible recoil whenever he dwelt on the possibility of seeing that flag in whose service he had won such honors, and to which he had given the best years of his youth, arrayed against him. Still, if the issue ever came, he could never have doubted where it would find him.

At this juncture it became important that Washington should make a trip to the Ohio River. The "soldiers' claims,"

as they were called, were not adjusted. These meant the promised award of lands to men who had served in the "Old French War." The Six Nations had recently sold their territories south of the Ohio to the British Crown. It was necessary that Washington should visit the wild lands, to select special tracts for which he would make application to government, in order that the long-standing soldiers' claims should be liquidated.

This journey must have formed a bright episode amid the dark fears and forebodings of that time. Washington set out in the pleasant October weather, with his favorite companion, Dr. Craik. They visited the scenes of their early exploits. The two companions lived over their youth

again. They had friendly conferences with the Indians. They swept in their canoe down the broad current of the Ohio. Deer bounded along the shores; flocks of wild game darkened the sky overhead. Here Washington could indulge, to the top of his bent, his old sporting proclivities. Once more, when night fell, they encamped on the river bank, and tasted the keen delight of a hunter's supper. The winds of the old Westmoreland meadow must have seemed to blow through those wild, free, happy days. They lie close to the long, dark, stormy years on which Washington was now to enter. Indeed, this expedition to the Ohio may be said to form the last real holiday of George Washington's life. Splendid honors and *fêtes* awaited him long afterward; but

these came when the close of the Revolution had left him, as he pathetically said, "an old man."

During this journey Washington made a visit to Fort Duquesne. It must have been a thrilling moment when he looked once more on the scene where his military career had ended eleven years before. The old days of hardships, struggles, and cruel disappointments could not fail to crowd on his memory as he gazed on the familiar site. Log-huts of Indian traders were scattered about, where, a century later, the busy, prosperous city of Pittsburg was to lift its spires.

This year of 1770, in which Washington made his journey to the Ohio, was memorable for the change which took place in the British Cabinet—a

change which was to have so tremendous an influence on the fortunes of America. Lord North was placed at the head of the British Government. The new minister had none of the "divining genius" or the large aims of the true statesman. He was as incapable of feeling the temper of the times as he was of adapting himself to it. He had no conception of a broad and generous policy in dealing with the new questions and events of his own age. These he was alike unfitted, by understanding and character, to comprehend.

It seemed a terrible irony which, at this crisis, placed the fortunes of the American Colonies in the hands of Lord North. He had one merit, however; he was a favorite with his royal master.

George III. had at last found a minister after his own heart. He could be safely trusted to carry out to the bitter end the oppressive policy of the king.

CHAPTER X.

GATHERING OF THE STORM.

A NEW chapter in the history of English and American affairs opened with Lord North's administration. He began, as was to be anticipated, with a fatal mistake. All the colonial taxes were to be revoked, *except that on tea.* This was retained, as Lord North expressly stated, in order to prove the RIGHT of England to tax America. The colonies met this measure with one which was certain to deal England a blow where she was most sensitive; they entered into a wide covenant to taste no tea.

Here, again, it was significant that

Virginia led her sister colonies. The method of retaliation originated with her Assembly.

In the midst of this public excitement a great gloom fell upon Mount Vernon in the loss of its only daughter. She had always been delicate, and sickened suddenly in her seventeenth year.

Washington's public position involved frequent absences from home. He now returned to find the young girl, to whom he was so deeply attached, in the last stages of consumption. In his grief he knelt at her bedside and poured out prayers for her recovery. This was one of the instances in which Washington's feelings overcame his usual reserve. His religion was deep and fervent, but it was not emotional. It partook of the strength and reticence

of his own character. A time was drawing near which was to test his piety. This was to prove, through long, dark hours, the chief support and solace of the soldier. But the young life for which he pleaded was doomed. His adopted daughter expired on the 9th of June, 1773.

Outside of that mourning home events marched rapidly. The proscribed tea-chests lay piled in the storehouses of the East India Company. Lord North now removed the export tax, supposing, with his usual fatuity in all that concerned the colonies, that the low price of the tea would at once secure large sales. He had not the faintest idea of the wide-spread indignation which his tyranny had aroused. The company sent its teas to America, and

we all know how the cargoes came to grief on that 18th of December, 1773, when the ships lay at anchor in Boston Harbor.

Matters had now reached a crisis. Boston was, at this time, the most flourishing commercial town on the continent. Its inhabitants had, from the beginning, been foremost in asserting their independence, and insisting on the sacred rights of freemen. The Parliament, therefore, regarded the little town by the sea as the "hotbed of sedition." When tidings of the destruction of the tea cargoes reached England, the enraged government resolved that a signal example should be made of Boston.

On the 10th of May, 1774, the act for closing the port reached the town.

This was a memorable day in the history of two worlds. It was on that day that Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette ascended the throne of France. The young sovereigns, when they first learned of the death of the old king, had fallen on their knees, exclaiming, "O, God, we are too young to reign!"

No shadow of the guillotine loomed darkly through the rejoicings of those May days; no thought of the devoted little town on the far western coast, on which England's bolt had fallen so heavily, entered the thought of monarch or courtier, amid the grand inaugurals of the new reign. The simple facts of history are often more incredible than the wildest romance. Time was to prove that the Boston Port Bill and the fall of the Bourbons had an intimate connection.

The bill which closed the port of Boston, and thus doomed to destruction the most flourishing commercial town on the continent, roused America. Each colony regarded the blow as aimed at itself. The letter, containing tidings of the bill, was read in the Virginia House of Burgesses. All business was suspended. A protest was made, and the 1st of June—the day on which Boston was to be blockaded at noon—set apart as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer.

The next morning, when the Burgesses re-assembled, Lord Dunmore, the governor of the colony, dissolved the House. The members immediately repaired to the old Raleigh Tavern, only a few paces from the Capitol. Under the old historic roof various memorable resolutions were passed. But the one

which proposed that the deputies of the colonies should meet annually in General Congress overshadows in importance every other.

On the 1st of June, 1774, Washington, as his diary states, "fasted rigorously and attended the services of his church." It was the day when the British vessels of war rode up at noon and blockaded the port. The Virginia gentleman who that day was fasting for Boston, was to prove a little later that he could also fight for her.

The progress of events only confirmed the worst fears of every lover of his country. It was evident that England was bent on crushing the liberties of America. But while, during the summer, the busy wharves of Boston grew silent under the black shadow of the

war-ships, and ruin crept slowly along the quaint, narrow streets that, a little while before, had been humming with life and prosperity, a new spirit was awakening throughout the land—a spirit that was destined to sweep everything before it. No man could, of course, forecast the hour of the Revolution, or discern what form it would take at the beginning. But the approach of that mighty storm which was to rend two nations apart, was felt in the air during all the summer of 1774—the last peaceful one which America was to know for years.

A new mood was coming over the people who inhabited the Atlantic seaboard of America — the mood which makes heroes of the men it possesses. The country did not want leaders at this time. The wisest heads and the

truest hearts of the nation came to her aid. Frequent meetings gave expression to the feeling of common danger, to the sense of common duty. Fresh measures of coercion and oppression only added fresh fuel to the popular resentment. The question at issue between England and America was fast becoming a life and death one to the colonists. Freedom and slavery hung in the balance for them and their posterity.

Washington was in the thick of affairs that summer. His position in his own county, the weight of his character and his word, made his example of immense consequence at this crisis. The meetings and conventions at which he was chairman prove, as all his speeches and letters do, his ardent sympathy with the

popular cause. When the hour of trial came, nobody could doubt where it would find him.

Yet his calm, sagacious mind could not deceive him as to the tremendous odds against his country, if it ever came to a war with England. Could America, he must often have questioned, send out her half-trained yeomen and militia to do battle with the most powerful foe in the world? The armies of Great Britain were flushed with the magnificent victories they had recently won under the administration of Pitt. Washington knew perfectly the scorn with which those seasoned veterans would regard the raw levies of the provinces. But the Old French War had been a rare training-school for the colonial soldiers. It had shown them the strength and

resources of their country; the weak points in the army of any enemy who should meet them on their native soil. Washington, too, had an unfaltering conviction of the right of his cause. It was this conviction which lit up these hours of doubt and anxiety with hope and courage. He knew it was not the part of a patriot to despair, so long as there was a country to be defended, a God of battles to appeal to.

Washington had been appointed a delegate to the General Congress which had been agreed on in the old Raleigh Tavern, on the day when Lord Dunmore dissolved the House of Burgesses. The congress met, the 5th of September, in Carpenter's Hall, in Philadelphia. The meeting was held with closed doors. It was the most mo-

mentous assembly that had ever gathered on the Western Continent. An eloquent writer says of this congress: "The most eloquent men of the various colonies were now for the first time brought together. They were known to each other by fame, but were personally strangers. The object which had called them together was of incalculable magnitude. The happiness of no less than three millions of people, with that of all their posterity, was staked on the wisdom and energy of their councils."

The session of that first congress lasted fifty-one days. No record of the speeches exists. But all the great questions which had brought them together were discussed by men who realized the tremendous interests with which they had been charged. The Stamp Act, the

Tea Tax, the Act for Quartering Troops, the Boston Port Bill, and various other illegal and oppressive measures of Great Britain came up for discussion and condemnation before an assembly composed of the wisest brains and noblest hearts in America. "To these grievous acts and measures," solemnly declared the small body of men in the old hall of the Quaker town, "America cannot submit."

The spirit of their resolutions breathed the temper of patriots and freemen. But the members proved that the old loyal feeling was not extinct, by a motion "to prepare a loyal address to his majesty."

That first Congress did its great work and closed. In the shortening autumn days Washington rode down to Mount Vernon. His heart must have been heavy. The scenes in which he had

just been an actor had aroused all his deep patriotism. His own future and that of his country must have loomed darkly before him. There was every reason now to believe that England was bent on driving her colonies to desperation. In that case, Washington had long settled with himself what supreme call he must obey. Yet the thought of leaving his beloved home, and the wife whose heart had been so lately torn with grief, must have cost him many a cruel moment.

During the winter that followed, one feeling and one purpose gained strength throughout the country. Military measures—hitherto confined to New England — were rapidly adopted by all the colonies. While the men-of-war rode in Boston Harbor, and General Gage,

with his British veterans, encamped on the Common, the drum-beat, that herald of war, began to be heard in the middle and southern provinces. Virginia was not backward. Independent companies were formed on her soil, and their officers constantly repaired to Washington for military instruction. The old, peaceful days had passed for Mount Vernon. A silence had settled upon gay Belvoir, for its proprietor had returned to England—a gloom had gathered over Mount Vernon. As Washington wandered among the ancient woodlands that winter, the winds that moaned among the leafless branches must have had a mournful prophecy to his ear and heart. But that season was too full of varied activities and demands to afford much time

for solitary reflection. He was often absent from home—summoned away to musters and reviews. Mount Vernon itself began to assume a military aspect as the companies met there to drill. All this must have seemed a good deal like the old fencing days of Washington's youth.

The Congress, in its petition to George III., had solemnly reminded him, that "from our sovereign there can be but one appeal." Deeds, when the worst came, would be sure to follow such words. But all prayers and warnings were disregarded. Contempt for the character of the colonists, and a fatal ignorance of their temper, prevailed in English counsels; and the obstinate King and the subservient minister went their own blind way.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

Nobody could, of course, foresee, in those days which immediately preceded the opening of the Revolution, where the storm would burst. Yet nobody was, perhaps, surprised that it first broke in New England. Every child can repeat the date of the pleasant April morning when "the shot was fired that was heard round the world;" and the long seven years' drama of the Revolution opened with the firing at Lexington and the fight at Concord.

The news of that fight shook the continent like an earthquake. As

breathless couriers carried the tale through the land, the popular feeling, like a mounting wave, swept every colony into the Revolution. When the news reached Virginia, a cry rang through the ancient province, that her liberties, like Massachusetts', were doomed! There was a general springing to arms. All eyes were now turned to Washington. He was everywhere regarded as the one best fitted to take command of the American forces.

Three weeks after the battle of Concord the second General Congress met in Philadelphia. Some of its members still shrank from severing the last bond which united them with Great Britain; and, even at that late hour, voices pleaded that a final petition should be sent to the government. It is a signifi-

cant fact that Washington approved of this motion.

But the "humble and dutiful petition to the king" encountered eloquent opposition. It was felt that the hour for appeals had passed, and that the one for action had come. John Adams, the delegate from Massachusetts, whose voice had been so powerful in the first Congress, now strongly opposed any further attempt at reconciliation, and it was at last abandoned as hopeless.

A League was now formed, which, among other powers, vested in Congress the right to declare war or peace. When Georgia—doubtful for awhile—joined the confederacy it extended from Nova Scotia to Florida.

That small body of delegates assembled in the old Quaker City on the

threshold of the summer of 1775, had an almost superhuman task laid upon it. After the formation of the League, which virtually constituted a nation, the first question that faced it was the raising and equipping an army.

It must have been a breathless moment when John Adams rose in the Congress, and moved that George Washington, of Virginia, be appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Forces. When his name was brought to the front, Washington sprang up and darted into the library. The old modesty, which, when he was a young member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, left him standing blushing and speechless among his peers, had not been overcome by sixteen years of

public life. In a few days, however, the appointment was made. Washington's sense of what he owed his country would not admit of his declining it. But in the solemn moment of accepting those vast, untried responsibilities, he said a few words as sincere as his own character: "I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room that I this day declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with."

It was characteristic of him, too, that he absolutely declined to accept any salary for his services.

It is doubtful whether, at the opening of the Revolution, any man made so great sacrifices as George Washington. To realize their extent, it must be re-

membered that he left a paradise behind him when he went from Mount Vernon. The fiery spirit of his youth had long been laid to rest. The thick of the battle had no charms for him now. He had no military ambitions to gratify, no personal interests to serve. The questions at issue between England and America did not vitally affect his own fortunes. He had every reason to believe, had he continued loyal to the government, that the happy, prosperous years of the past, might still stretch far into his future. His calm and reasonable mind could never be the victim of illusions. He must have foreseen all the possibilities of defeat. In those sterner times, he knew what fate might await the leader of rebel armies. He would not hide from himself the

chances of the prisoner's doom or the traitor's death.

At the awful moment when he looked these things in the face, George Washington must speak for himself. "It is my full intention, if needful," he wrote to his brother, "to devote life and fortune to the cause."

At this time his deepest solicitude was for the wife whom he would leave lonely and anxious at Mount Vernon. The letter of manly tenderness which he wrote her on setting out for the camp, was one certain to appeal to the heart and mind of a high-souled woman. In that letter something of the fervor of a young lover mingled with the solemn temper of the hero.

He had previously taken every care for his mother. He had removed her

from her country home to Fredericksburg, where she could remain in the vicinity of friends, and yet be remote from danger. The small dwelling of one upright story, where the mother of the deliverer of his country passed the remainder of her days, stood on one of the great northern and southern highways. Couriers constantly passed that simple home. One would bring news of glorious triumphs, and another would follow with stories of loss and disaster. But the mother of Washington preserved through all changes of fortune the dignified serenity so characteristic of her.

The Commander-in-Chief received his commission on the 20th of June, 1775. The day after, he set out from Philadelphia for the army.

Less than twenty miles from the city,

a courier, spurring in hot haste, met the brilliant little cavalcade that was escorting Washington through the State, with tidings of the Battle of Bunker Hill. The General's first eager question, "How did the militia stand fire?" shows the secret anxiety which the soldier had carried all this time. He knew that the raw New England levies had undergone a terrible test. They had met the British veterans in fair fight for the first time.

After hearing the courier's account of the fight, he exclaimed, "The liberties of the country are safe!"

One seems almost to hear that tone of confident exultation ringing down through more than a century.

Those about the General remarked that a weight of doubt and anxiety

seemed to have been lifted from his soul.

On the 3d of July, George Washington took command of the armies at Cambridge—a command which he devoutly hoped would close with the next autumn, but which he was destined to hold for the next eight years.

The shouts of the soldiers assembled to welcome him, and the thunders of artillery, first gave warning to the enemy, besieged in Boston, that the Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces—or, as they would have contemptuously termed them, the muster of rebels—was in camp.

The tall figure, the noble face, the dignified presence of the stately Virginian, must have been a sight never to be forgotten by the spectators, as he

wheeled his horse and drew his sword under that elm whose ancient branches still battle with the winter storms, and grow green with the May. Every eye in the camp, and among the vast throng which had crowded into Cambridge, gazed with awed admiration on the new General. He was in the prime of his manhood—forty-three at that time—and just the ideal of a soldier in looks and bearing. All who met Washington concur in ascribing to him a singular majesty of presence. It impressed those who had been all their lives familiar with courts. Lafayette, before his introduction, instantly distinguished Washington amid the group of American officers about him.

A strange scene met the eyes of the new Commander-in-Chief that July morn-

ing. He was not familiar with New England life and habits. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of social amenities and refinements. His own temperament inclined him to a careful observance of these. Something that was noblest and finest in the old cavaliers of his race was in their descendant, who, that morning at Cambridge, gazed astonished on the rude encampment of yeomanry. For he knew those rustic, undisciplined, ill-appointed troops had just matched their strength with the proudest army and navy of the world.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

No general of ancient or modern times was probably ever more amazed than was George Washington at sight of the forces of which he had taken command. The men had left their plows, seized their firelocks, and marched to the scene of action at the call of their country. The tents must have been a sight for laughter and tears. They were made of sail-cloth or stone, of birches or boards, of turf or brush, as suited the resources and tastes of the occupants. The soldiers were destitute of arms, uniforms, stores —every equipment that an army re-

quires. They had very imperfect ideas of military order, and were liable to strongly resent any attempt to exercise necessary discipline. They were bound together by a common love of their country, a common sense of her wrongs, and by the wrath of freemen against the proud and powerful foe who was bent on destroying their liberties.

In this temper of the yeoman soldiery lay the strength of the army, the hope of America. The hearts that throbbed under those homespun coats burned with an undying patriotism; the hands, brown as the furrows they had been tilling, were eager to cross swords again with the enemy that held command of Boston, and rode in insolent triumph in the harbor.

The ride which Washington took that

summer morning along the American lines, stretching weak and irregular from Winter Hill to Dorchester Neck, was not calculated to inspire the new chief with more sanguine hopes than the sight of the encampment at Cambridge. That first day of command must have occasioned him the keenest disappointment. The numbers and equipment of the American forces had been greatly exaggerated to him.

At the summit of Prospect Hill Washington drew rein, and gazed on the British encampment that lay before him. He saw the flag to whose service he had given the pride and strength of his youth. The folds floated in triumph from the summit of Bunker Hill, and from the ships-of-the-line in the harbor. He must have recalled the day—now

more than sixteen years ago—when he planted that standard on the smoking ruins of Fort Duquesne. Under that flag now lay an army perfectly equipped and admirably disciplined. Under him was assembled a motley force of about fourteen thousand levies, full of the high, free spirit they had brought from their native hills, and quite ready to rebel or desert at any attempt to maintain military discipline.

As Washington gazed once more on the wide-mouthed chimneys and steep-roofed houses of Boston, he must have recalled, too, that time when, with his gay young companions, he clattered into the narrow streets of the humming little seaport. Those bustling streets were silent now. The piers were rotting about the wharves that had been

so full of varied, busy life. England had set her iron heel on all the activity and industry of the old days.

The British had taken possession of Boston to find themselves blockaded there by the American forces. These were distributed in a long, semicircular line, extending eight or nine miles. The farthest northern post lay at Winter Hill; the most southern, at Roxbury and Dorchester Neck.

As Washington made his first survey that summer morning; as his keenly observant eyes took in the weak points in the long, straggling American lines, he must have been astonished that such an army could hold Gage and his veterans blockaded in Boston for a day.

The first care of the General was, of course, to improve and strengthen the

defenses of the camp. The whole army soon gave evidence of a vigorous and efficient command. As soon as the main forts were strengthened by additional works, and something like military order was established, Washington grew eager to draw the enemy out of Boston. He longed to bring his yeoman soldiery once more face to face with Gage's seasoned troops; but the enemy did not venture on an engagement.

The summer, the autumn, the winter —with more than the usual rigor of a New England winter—wore away, and still the long, blockading cordon kept the British closely imprisoned in Boston. The town, unable to break through the besieging lines and obtain supplies from the country around, began to suffer severely.

That winter was full of new anxieties, vexations, and trials for Washington. There were times, during those first months of command, when he bitterly regretted having assumed it. It is not singular that, amid such untried circumstances and responsibilities, even his patience sometimes gave out. One of his deepest annoyances was the general insubordination of the troops. Washington at first misunderstood the temperament and character of the New England soldier. The latter's native independence, his openly expressed contempt for rules and forms, shocked one who, by nature and education, had a profound regard for military rank and etiquette. It took some time, and some bitter experience, for the General and the troops under him to learn and appreciate the

sterling qualities, the splendid staying power, of each other.

As one reads the history of those months, they seem more incredible than the wildest romance. Mistake and inefficiency, delay and parsimony, in every department of service, filled the prompt, fiery spirited commander with amazement and disgust. Under his almost perfect self-command burned a fierce temper. He scorned petty characters and dealings, and it was at first difficult for him to make due consideration for ideas, habits, practices, which formed the antithesis of his own.

Washington's discouragements must have seemed to culminate on the day that he learned there were but thirty-two barrels of powder in camp. With this amount of ammunition he was actu-

ally besieging the British army in Boston! At the time of his taking the command, the Committee of Supplies had made a return of three hundred barrels. This instance affords a perfect illustration of the careless management of military affairs, which so severely tried Washington's soul at that period. He lost no time in obtaining fresh supplies. Happily, the enemy made no sortie at this critical moment. Washington dispatched agents to all quarters for lead and powder. No quantity, however small, was to be rejected when the need was so imminent. After immense exertions the American camp was supplied with fresh ammunition.

In November Mrs. Washington joined her husband at the headquarters which had been provided for him in Cam-

bridge. She had made the long journey from Mount Vernon in her own private carriage. There had been more or less fear that the beautiful home of the General of the rebel armies would be marked out as an especial object of British vengeance. Mrs. Washington, however, had not shared this alarm, and had declined the guard which her friends had offered when they advised her to flee for safety. Washington himself did not believe she was in any peril; but he urged her to come to him; and, as we read of her long, slow journey, with the escorts and guards of honor, and the ceremonious receptions that awaited her along the route, we are reminded of the splendid progress of queens, in ancient times, through their dominions.

The presence of Mrs. Washington at headquarters was a great relief to her husband. Petty rivalries and jealousies there had already added to his discomfort. His wife presided in her new sphere with her usual grace and dignity, and gave to the ancient Cambridge mansion something of the home atmosphere of Mount Vernon.

During the whole of that winter the wonder was—a wonder which has never been fully explained—why the enemy, the very flower of the British army, did not sally in force from the town, break through the weak besieging lines, and carry defeat and dismay into the ranks of the rebels.

But all those months the war-ships rode in the harbor, the tramp of the red-coats echoed through the narrow

streets, shaded by the gabled, steep-roofed houses, and the militia still held their lines unbroken from Winter Hill to Dorchester Neck.

We all know how the monotony of the siege was broken up at last. On that cold March night of 1776, when Washington intrenched himself at Dorchester Heights, he held the city of Boston in his power. On the 17th the memorable embarkation took place, and the last sail of the British fleet disappeared from Boston Harbor.

The next day, with drums beating and colors flying, and amid the joyful welcomes of the people, Washington entered the town he had delivered from its enemies. The American General had won his first victory.

It does not fall within the compass of

this brief biography to tell the long story of the Revolution. Many eloquent pens have written of the Siege of Boston, of the masterly retreat from Long Island, of the late escape at the critical moment from New York, of the weary winter marchings through the Jerseys, of the midnight crossing of the Delaware, of the victories of Trenton and Princeton, of the huts at Morristown and the unutterable miseries of Valley Forge, of the defeats of Brandywine and Germantown, until all these were crowned at last with the splendid success and the final surrender before the allied armies at Yorktown. Each one of these scenes forms a thrilling drama. Many of them live, not only in the pages of history, but in the ballads of the poet and on the canvas of the painter.

The War of the Revolution was, from the beginning, a war of defense. It was in the very nature of things that it should be so. It afforded comparatively few opportunities for brilliant deeds, and for those sudden displays of great military genius which dazzle the imagination, and make the world hold its breath. The "American Fabias" was not a title which Bonaparte would have coveted. We know with what contempt he spoke of the Revolution to Lafayette. But the man who had the power to wait, knew, and was always ready when the hour came for him to strike. "It is simply unfair," says one of his biographers, "to compare Washington with those great generals who figure in the pages of history, and who have won their fame at the head of vast armies of veteran

troops furnished with boundless supplies. Those generals did not have an army to create out of raw militia. They did not have an empty treasury, an unhoused, half-fed, half-clothed soldiery. They did not have to write, as he did, in one dark moment of the disastrous campaign of 1776, that "five hundred dollars would be of immense service to him."

With veteran generals, with the flower of Hessian and British troops arrayed against him, he had also to contend with or silently endure the jealousies and underminings of his subordinates, the perpetual interference of Congress with his military plans, and the ignorance, incapacity, and obstinacy of those to whom he was obliged to confide the execution of his orders at most critical moments.

Between the morning fight at Concord and the evacuation of New York by the British troops, November 25, 1783—the last scene of the war—lay almost nine years. No doubt it seemed more than all the rest of their lives to our ancestors. A few days after the last scarlet uniform had disappeared from the soil, a scene occurred to which the pen of no historian can do justice. Washington took leave of his officers in the old New York Tavern, near the ferry, where a barge waited to convey him across the Hudson to Paulus Hook. That last interview, with all that it meant, and all the memories that crowded about the hour, overcame even the great self-command of Washington. He broke down like a child. He gazed through blinding tears on the faces of

the men who had shared with him unspeakable toils, hardships, and perils. As each officer approached, he silently kissed the brown, bearded face with more than a brother's tenderness.

Not a word was spoken. The officers followed that beloved, stately figure as it passed on foot through a corps of light infantry to the ferry. When he arrived there, Washington entered the barge, removed his hat, and waved a silent adieu. It requires very little effort of imagination to see the tall figure standing there, the grave, benignant face, the gray hair waving in the autumn wind, and the dark barge moving slowly away over the Hudson.

On the summer morning when he took command of the American army under the elm at Cambridge, Washing-

ton was in the prime of his years. But the eight that followed had told heavily on his great strength. There is something very touching in the manner with which he apologized to the soldiers at Newburg for using glasses, when he was compelled to read a document in their presence. "I am getting to be an old man," he said. This was, it appears, the way in which he began to regard himself, though he had not, in reality, yet crossed his fifty-second birthday.

Nineteen days after the Commander-in-Chief had parted with his officers in New York, another memorable scene took place. This was at Annapolis, when, with a few simple and noble words, Washington surrendered his command to Congress, and asked permission to retire from the service of his country.

A large audience witnessed that event with breathless interest. The President of Congress, who accepted the resignation, closed his address with a prophecy: "The glory of your virtues will descend to remotest generations!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PEACE.

THE next day Washington started for his beloved Mount Vernon. He reached it that night. It was Christmas Eve. Perhaps all that had gone before did not seem too heavy a price to pay for the rest and joy with which he kept the ancient holiday under his own roof-tree; while he thought how a free nation, for the first time, could keep the festival with him.

He took up the old life with the old zest. The highest ambition of the man who had won the liberties of America was, to use his own grandly simple

words, "to be a farmer and live an honest man."

He resumed his old ways of living, although, during the winter of unusual rigor which followed his return, he was literally "snow-bound" at Mount Vernon. His military habits still clung to him, and on awakening in the morning he would find himself listening for the revéille of the camp. But with the return of spring he was engrossed with the management of his estate. This demanded all his time and energies, as Mount Vernon showed, in almost every department, the long absence of its proprietor. Washington set himself at work to repair the injuries his domain had undergone, to improve the buildings, and to beautify the grounds. He had great enjoyment in laying these out

with ornamental shrubs and hedges, in trailing ivies, and planting holly bushes. He also had much delight in setting out trees, of which he was almost as great a lover—in a different way—as Wordsworth.

The days seem to wear again the idyllic charm of his youth. He could not have felt that he was an old man, as he rode in the mornings, still full of health and vigor, about Mount Vernon.

But he had to pay the price of his fame. The world would not leave the deliverer of America alone in his congenial retirement. A constant stream of guests now flowed to his door. They consumed his time and were a heavy tax on his resources, which had been seriously strained during the war. Washington's guests met with the sim-

ple, dignified courtesy characteristic of their host. Yet there is a touch of his native shrewd humor in his manner of alluding to those who now crowded his board. "They say," he writes, "they come out of respect to me. Would not the word curiosity do as well?"

During the three years which followed the close of the Revolution—years which Washington spent under his own roof—he was not free from anxieties. His most earnest thought was still for his country. In his retirement he watched the progress of her affairs with profound solicitude. There was much in the condition of America to give him intense anxiety. The young nation had entered on an experiment so vast that her wisest states-

men might well recoil at the task before them. Everything was tentative in the organization and policy of the new government. The "Thirteen States" were no longer bound together by the pressure of a common peril. The tie that had held them in war proved too feeble for peace. The Confederacy framed by the second Congress, and from which so much was hoped for America and for humanity, proved, in its practical workings, a failure.

This became so apparent at last, and the condition of affairs grew so disastrous, that it became evident that the only salvation of the country was in a change of government. A convention, composed of delegates from all the States, was summoned to meet in Philadelphia. To that famous convention

the United States of America owe their Constitution.

The greatest man in the nation could not fail to be required at this crisis. Every eye was turned to Mount Vernon. Virginia placed him at the head of the delegates whom she sent to the convention. Washington accepted the nomination with extreme reluctance, but the dangers of the time left him no choice. He repaired to Philadelphia, to find himself once more in the thick of public life. On the first sitting of the convention, May 25, 1788, he was unanimously appointed President.

The long, memorable summer passed away. Washington's presence and influence were, no doubt, a controlling power in all the measures of that convention. In September the great work

was finished, and the Constitution was given to the world.

The course of affairs now only permitted him a brief return to his home. In the following spring he was elected President of the United States.

That high office had no attractions for him; but his friends spared no argument or entreaties to induce him to accept it. Their appeals to his sense of duty were at last crowned with success, and he took on his waxing years and waning strength the heavy burden which inhered in the title.

Before he set out for New York, then the seat of government, he visited his mother in her simple home at Fredericksburg. The meeting must have been full of tender, solemn feeling for both. She was very proud of her illustrious

son, but she never manifested any elation over his success. She was an invalid at the time, and that meeting proved their last one.

Washington's journey to New York was like the progress of a beloved sovereign through his dominions. Wherever he appeared the bells rang, the cannon roared, and crowds thronged the highways with welcoming huzzas.

But no scene in the eventful journey made so deep an impression as the one at Trenton, where the historic "triumphal arch" spanned the bridge. It was a sunny afternoon when Washington, on the way to his inauguration, reached the banks of the Delaware. The terrible night, twelve years before, when, in the darkest moment of his country's fortunes, he crossed the river

amid the bitter cold, the blinding snow, the drifting ice, must have risen before him. And now crowds of fair women had gathered in the pleasant April afternoon, to honor the Father of his Country. Young girls, dressed in white, and lovely as the garlands that crowned them, strewed flowers and sang songs before him. Those two scenes on the Delaware—the wild, black midnight, with its storming winds and blinding snows, and the smiling spring day, with the shouting crowds and the joyous, flower-decked maidens — must have hung forever afterward, companion pieces, in his memory.

The inauguration took place in New York on the last day of April, 1789. Nothing of the kind had ever occurred in America. The scene was one of

breathless interest to the vast crowds who witnessed it. It was a solemn moment for the country, when her victorious General, who, at the close of the war, had, with stern indignation, refused the crown his army was eager to place on his head, came out on the balcony, laid his hand on the Bible and took his oath of office.

Streets and windows and roofs of houses, were crowded with spectators. Washington wore, the chronicles tell us, "a full suit of dark brown cloth of American manufacture, with a steel-hilted dress-sword, white silk stockings, and silver shoe-buckles." As we read this, we are reminded that it all happened a hundred years ago. When the oath was spoken, the folds of a flag suddenly floated from the great cupola.

At that signal, the artillery thundered from the battery, and George Washington was President of the United States.

The great soldier had now entered upon a new field. It remained to be proved whether those qualities which had shone so conspicuous in the camp, would be equally successful in the cabinet. Difficulties surrounded the new President. A system of government was on its trial. Washington had no precedents, no traditions, to guide him. The new Constitution had encountered the most vehement opposition, and some of the States had reluctantly, and with very small majorities, consented to accept it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

All sorts of new duties and relations pressed upon the President. Not the smallest of these were the social ones. At the beginning, as was to be expected, crowds of company made terrible inroads upon the precious time which was needed for public affairs.

The arrival of Mrs. Washington was a great relief at this juncture. She came to share the honors and cares of her husband's new position, as she had gone before to the hardships of the camp, to the miseries of Valley Forge.

She used often to say that "it had been her fortune to hear the first cannon at the opening, and the last at the closing, of the campaign."

The position on which she entered now as the first lady of the nation, as the representative of American womanhood, was a wholly novel one, and must have had many trials and embarrassments for the wife of our first President. It is not unlikely that she sometimes sighed, amid her new dignities, for the old rough camp times, with all their limitations and makeshifts. There is something significant in her habit of alluding to her days of public ceremonials as "lost days."

But Martha Washington was equal to the occasion, whether that summoned her to the soldier's hut or the Presi-

dent's home. Some simple, noble words which she wrote in New York, in the winter of 1789, deserve a place here. There is the ring of a true woman's feeling in every line:

"I am still determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may be; for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other about with us, wherever we go."

The wife who could write such words, and live them, must have been a source of unspeakable strength and comfort to her husband, amid all his various public service, at the head of armies or as the chief of the nation.

It is not surprising that a great habit

of absent-mindedness grew upon Washington. He was not always aware when his wife addressed him. A little story has survived, which happily illustrates their domestic relations. When the wife found her husband in one of his fits of abstraction, and wished to arrest his attention, it became her habit to take hold of one of his coat buttons. This action never failed to arouse him. He would stand still, giving her his undivided attention, a pleased, tender look in his eyes, as he gazed down on the face, and listened to the voice that was sweetest to him on earth.

During the first summer of his administration the President had a severe illness. It lasted six weeks. His oak-and-iron constitution at last triumphed over it. But it is doubtful whether his

health was not permanently shaken at this time.

The multitude of questions which faced him on his recovery was enough to perplex the wisest, most far-seeing statesman. The young republic, at whose head he stood, saw its finances impoverished, its frontiers insecure, its foreign commerce in a most disastrous condition.

Washington faced the situation with the old courage of the soldier. He formed his Cabinet, he exerted all his influence to allay the jealousies of parties, the dissensions of Congress — for the tomahawk, buried for awhile, was at its old work among the northwestern settlements.

It would require volumes to furnish an adequate history of the four years

of Washington's first administration. And while he was in the thick of the struggle, and growing old there, the harvests were ripening in the pleasant Virginia summers about Mount Vernon, and he was looking to the close of those four years' service with something of the eager longing of a prisoner to the day of his release.

But his anticipations were not to be realized. His country made her supreme voice heard again. She demanded, in the name of her new liberties, and her present perils, the re-election of her first President. After a bitter conflict with himself, Washington again bowed his head to the yoke, and consented to retain his office for another four years.

These were crowded for him with great and unlooked-for events. The

most tremendous was the French Revolution. That mighty upheaval of all the social, political, and religious traditions of centuries not only convulsed Europe, but made a powerful vibration on our own shores. It was widely insisted that the American Revolution had paved the way for the French one. No one could question that the former had had an immense influence on the latter. We were bound to France by many grateful memories and associations. She had acknowledged the independence of, and entered into a treaty with the American republic, before it had a recognized existence among the nations. She had robbed her own scant treasury to replenish our empty one. Her officers had drawn their swords in our cause. Her army and her navy had

joined our forces, and compelled the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, on the day that established the independence of the United States. The young Lafayette had made himself dear to every American.

The progress of the French Revolution had been watched with intense solicitude in America. When the Bastile fell—when the key of that ancient prison-fortress had been sent by Lafayette to Washington—one impulse thrilled the heart of the nation. There was a passionate sympathy for France in her heroic resolve to cast off the yoke that had oppressed her for ages. But as months rolled on, and fresh tidings crossed the sea, of the risings of the mob, of the massacres of September, of the beheading of the king, of the

deadly work of the guillotine, the wildest excitement shook America. The interest in the affairs of France superseded every other. Parties were formed. Crowds gathered on the corners of the streets and talked the Red Republicanism which the fierce mobs of St. Antoine were shouting.

But the popular excitement reached its climax when France, after sending Louis XVI. to the guillotine, proclaimed war against England. America's duty at this crisis became the supreme question of the hour. "Was she now," asked the French party, with fierce indignation, "to stand coldly aloof and watch the struggle between her ancient foe and that France who, in the hour of her utmost peril, had so generously sprung to her defense?"

Gratitude, sympathy, common principles and aims, would, it appeared, force us to take the side of France. Swept away by the excitement of the time, a large party in the nation insisted on declaring war with England.

At this crisis the great qualities of the statesman shone out conspicuous as the soldier's had at the head of armies. Washington, unmoved by the passions of the hour, decided on neutrality. Time has absolutely vindicated the wisdom of this decision; but, at that epoch, it greatly shook his popularity. Public feeling, in many instances, set strongly against him. He, who had given such transcendent proofs of his patriotism, was accused of a secret desire to establish a monarchy. With all his large-mindedness, he was acutely

sensitive to public opinion. The responsibilities of that time, with the cruel slanders that filled the air, wore heavily upon his health and spirits. His splendid self-control occasionally broke down. He once solemnly declared that he would "rather be in his grave than President of the United States."

Fresh anxieties and complications followed the arrival of the young Genet, the minister whom the French republic had sent to the United States. He arrived, confident of the sympathy and support of America. Received by shouting thousands, welcomed with feasts and ovations, he was little disposed to regard the proclamation of neutrality. He had landed at Charleston. In his short sojourn there he showed his temper by "issuing commis-

sions for arming and equipping vessels of war, and manning these with American seamen, to serve against the West Indies!"

Washington displayed great forbearance under these provocations. But the young, hot-headed minister, used to recent French methods of dealing with authorities, and believing himself sure of popular support, was bent on carrying out his own plans, regardless of all proclamations of neutrality.

The President saw that prompt and powerful measures were imperative, if he would not see his country plunged into a foreign war. It was a critical moment. Genet retorted passionately when Washington interfered. France naturally resented the neutrality, which appeared so ungrateful a return of her

past services. England scored up heavy grievances against us.

No doubt the course of Washington at this juncture, surprised and pained many sincere lovers of their country. The old revolutionary memories, the sense of all we owed to France, burned in many hearts through all that agitated summer of 1793. It savored to them of black ingratitude to turn our back on our ancient ally—the young Republic who had just entered into the struggle with her mighty foe.

Events have justified Washington's course, and proved its wise, far-seeing statesmanship. But it is not impossible that temperament had some influence over his convictions at this crisis. With all his intense love of liberty, there was a side of his nature which was strongly

conservative, and this side, as well as his feelings, must have recoiled at the terrible cruelties of the French Revolution.

The death of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette had been a great shock to Washington. During the last years of the Revolution, surprisingly familiar and pleasant relations had, through the influence of Lafayette, existed between the young French sovereigns and the American Commander-in-Chief. The King, his own treasury bankrupt, had still managed to transmit finances to our impoverished armies. When the Marquis, on his return to France, presented himself at court, the Queen said to him, in her gay, joyous manner, "Give me good news of our good Americans, of our dear republicans!"

She was the beautiful, happy Marie Antoinette of the Tuileries and of "Little Trianon" when she said that. One seems to see it all—the splendid court, the lovely young Queen, the stately young Marquis at his audience, and, hovering in the background, the specter of the guillotine, the shadow of the dungeon of Olmütz!

Dangers thickened about the path of the administration. In Pennsylvania the discontent at last broke into open riots. A military force of fifteen thousand men was raised. They entered the western counties. Their presence spread wide terror among the insurgents. The nascent rebellion, which, a little later, might have become a civil war, was extinguished without bloodshed.

Differences, personal and political, in

the Cabinet threatened its dissolution, and vastly augmented the President's anxieties at this period. The Indians continued their ravages along the western frontier. England's behavior inflamed the popular feeling. The frequent impressment of American seamen, the failure of the government to give up the posts at the south of the lakes, according to treaty, were all deeply resented in America.

Washington faced all these difficulties at home and abroad with his tried sagacity and his large moral courage. His influence proved powerful enough to keep the Cabinet from dissolution. The French Government at last listened to America's representations, and consented to recall its minister. The United States, in its turn, dispatched

James Monroe to France. He was received with open arms by the Assembly, as he was well known to be in sympathy with the Republic.

Affairs had grown comparatively smooth before the close of Washington's second administration. There was a universal desire that he would consent to serve another term. This desire had its root in the feeling that the liberties of the country were only safe while he stood at the helm. Every argument and entreaty—the agitation at home, the warlike aspect of Europe — were brought forward to induce him to remain at his post. But Washington was inexorable. The great soul, the strong frame, had grown tired at last. They needed now the home of his youth, the familiar scenes, the rest and

comfort of tranquil days at Mount Vernon.

All his letters at this period bear pathetic evidence of this longing: "The remainder of my life," he wrote to his old friend and fellow-soldier, Henry Knox, "which, in the course of nature, cannot be long, will be occupied in rural amusements; I shall seclude myself as much as possible from the noisy and bustling world." He adds an earnest desire to see his friends at Mount Vernon, "more than twenty miles from which, after I arrive there, it is not likely that I shall ever be."

John Adams was elected second President of the United States. On the 3d of March, 1797, Washington gave a farewell dinner. Many distinguished persons were present, among whom were

conspicuous the new President and his wife.

There was a great deal of hilarity at the feast. But when the cloth was removed, and Washington said, in his quiet, impressive tones, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the last time I shall drink your health as a public man," the gayety came to a sudden end. Each guest at the board felt the solemn meaning for America of those words. The clouds had not vanished from the political horizon. There was still much in the outlook to fill the heart of every lover of his country with doubt and foreboding; and the pilot who had guided the ship through so many storms was about to leave the helm. Amid such thoughts the close of the feast could not fail to be a sad one.

On the following day the administration of George Washington came to an end. As he left Congress Hall, a vast crowd followed him to his home, eager for another look at that beloved countenance. He turned and waved his hat while they cheered; the calm face was radiant at that moment; the gray hair streamed in the March wind. But when he reached his own door there was a swift change—sadness gathered over his face, tears blinded his eyes, and our first President made his farewell to the people, and went back to his private life, with a simple gesture.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRAND, SIMPLE LIFE: THE SUN TURNING WESTWARD.

As soon as possible, Washington set out for Mount Vernon. His wife and her granddaughter accompanied him. With them, also, rode a young stranger, who, though a foreigner, bore the name of his host. When the dangers thickened about his house, George Washington Lafayette had been sent by his father to his old Commander-in-Chief.

The Austrian dungeon of Olmütz had, through those terrible years, saved Lafayette's head from the guillotine. We know how Washington's heart had grieved for his friend—what vain efforts

he had made for his release. He felt a father's interest in the boy who bore his name, and whom so mournful a fate had bequeathed to his love and care. He could not look at the youth without being reminded of the day, long ago, when, dining in Philadelphia with his officers, he first met the young Marquis, who had left his splendid home and crossed the winter seas, to offer his services to the cause of American freedom.

That was the beginning of the long, intimate friendship which existed between the American General and the young French nobleman. Differences of age, of nationality, of temperament, of early training, only seemed to augment the affection with which the two men regarded each other. Their friendship

lights up the long, rugged years of the Revolution with many a tender episode. Their affection strengthened the souls of each in many a bitter hour. The enthusiastic loyalty of his young friend was doubly precious to Washington in those cruel moments when some of his own generals failed him. In his Austrian dungeon, Lafayette must have solaced many hours of his captivity in thoughts of Washington, in memories of Mount Vernon, where he had been such a beloved and honored guest.

Once more Washington took up the old life with greater zest than ever. Again he might be seen on horseback in the early mornings, riding about the grounds, giving his orders, supervising his workmen, inspecting improvements, and planning others, while he watched

the Virginia spring grow into summer over the wide landscape.

"I had rather live on a farm than be the Emperor of the world!" he had once exclaimed. "And yet they are charging me with wanting to be a King!"

But it was not altogether paradise at Mount Vernon. Though this was remote from towns and hotels, guests from all parts of the world, drawn hither by various motives, poured in upon the illustrious host, consumed his time, and were a heavy strain upon resources that had been greatly diminished.

Washington began to perceive the need, at this time, of some person who could relieve him from a share of the burdens which these constant visitors imposed. He had a young nephew,

who bore the beloved name of Lawrence — a favorite with Washington — whom he invited to his home, and whose services in the *rôle* of host greatly relieved his uncle.

With this nephew and young Lafayette and his tutor, and Mrs. Washington's pretty granddaughter, who was a great pet with her future uncle, for she afterward married the nephew, there must have been a great deal of gay young life about the ancient rooms and halls. Here came, to share this life for awhile, in his strange, romantic exile, the Duke of Orleans, Louis Philippe, afterward King of France.

Indeed, Mount Vernon was the resort of all sorts of distinguished and historic persons, during the last years of its owner.

The autumn after Washington's return home he was gladdened by tidings that Lafayette had been released from his long captivity, and was on his way to Paris. His son, eager to rejoin his father and his family, sailed for home soon afterward.

But it was not Washington's fortune to long enjoy his hardly earned rest. War clouds again loomed threatening above the horizon. This time they appeared in a new quarter of the sky. The French Government—its temper grown irritable and exacting—refused to receive the American minister who succeeded Monroe. Three special envoys had been sent by President Adams to France, with the hope that a mutual treaty would adjust all disputes between the two governments. The envoys had

not found it possible to come to any agreement. The Directory was confident that the ancient relations of France with America would prevent a war, and passed measures which struck a deadly blow at American commerce.

These high-handed acts were the signal for a storm of indignation which swept through the land. Ancient ties yielded before the sense of present injustice. It seemed for awhile that war was inevitable between France and America.

President Adams was empowered to raise an army of ten thousand men. There was only one man whom the nation would consent to place at the head of that army.

The Secretary of War carried in person the commission to Washington which

made him "Commander-in-Chief of all the armies raised or to be raised."

So the old dream of a happy, tranquil evening of life was rudely broken! The gray-haired soldier heard once more the summons that had thrilled his heart in his youth, and he prepared to answer again the call of his country.

But his reluctance to do this was so great that he only yielded on the condition that "he should not be called into the field until the army required his presence there."

It soon became imperative that he should leave Mount Vernon again. Weeks followed that must have told heavily on his waning vigor. He was obliged to superintend the organization of the new army, to appoint its officers, to attend to infinite details, and to bear,

as he could, the old wearisome burden of military cares. He did all this, too, with his native scrupulous thoroughness.

The attitude of America now produced its effect. It became evident to the most arrogant member of the Directory that the American people were resolved on sustaining their government. France receded from her first position. It was gracefully intimated to President Adams that his representative should be received "with the respect due a free, independent, and powerful nation."

So the clouds rolled away from the horizon, and all America must have drawn a breath of relief as they disappeared.

Washington returned once more to Mount Vernon. Busy, crowded days awaited him there. He had a vast cor-

respondence on army and other matters. Each day he passed hours in his study, and other hours in a personal supervision of his estate, and an attempt to bring its varied affairs into order. He dined out occasionally. He received, as always, many guests under his own roof, guests that not only included his own countrymen, but many distinguished foreigners, who, visiting the Republic, were naturally curious to behold its most illustrious citizen. His fine health, his vigorous activity, were sources of constant congratulation among his friends.

He who had so long moved at the head of armies was still seen, in the early mornings, riding, with the old military stateliness about Mount Vernon, while the thin gray hair shone about the fine, calm face. The eighteenth cent-

ury had entered upon its last month, and George Washington was saying to himself that he was drawing near his sixty-eighth birthday.

His own land and the nations afar off were praising him. That consciousness could not fail to give him pleasure. The approval of the wise and good had always been precious to him.

It is pleasant now to feel that that last year must have been full of restful quiet and content for him. He was in the one spot on earth that he loved best. He was absorbed in those healthful activities that were a part of himself. The commander of armies, the deliverer of a nation, the first President of the American Republic, aspired to no loftier name than that of farmer. The long, stormy years now lay behind him; he might

reasonably hope that some tranquil ones stretched before him. His life had been crowned with such success as had never fallen to the lot of man. If the light shone for him in the West, it was such a light as he could never have dreamed of when it wore the radiant flush of the dawn.

Yet there is a pathetic significance in the words which Washington wrote to Lafayette, fifteen years before, when the two parted "on the way to Annapolis."

"I often asked myself, as our carriages separated, whether that was to be the last sight I should ever have of you? And though I wished to say 'no!' my fears answered 'yes!' I called to mind the days of my youth, and found they had long since fled, to return no more; that I was now descending the hill I

had been fifty-two years climbing; and though I was blessed with a good constitution, I was of a short-lived family, and might soon expect to be entombed in the mansion of my fathers."

This melancholy of a brave soul, able to look its fate in the face with calmness, recurs frequently in the talk and correspondence of Washington, during the crowded fifteen years which followed that writing. When he comes to speak of himself, a minor key haunts the words. There is a certain weariness between the lines, as though the writer had grown tired with the heat and burden of the long day. There is no touch of despondency or despair—no false note anywhere. That voice always rings true to courage and cheer, to faith in God and hope for man. But you

feel that, at times, when he withdrew into himself, he looked forward to the unbroken slumber with a certain quiet longing—with an instinct, too, that the end could not be, for him, very far off. Despite his mother's great age—she had died in the first summer of his presidency—his own splendid health, the Washington breed, as he had said to Lafayette, was not a long-lived one.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO THE END—DECEMBER 17, 1799.

It was on a clear, calm morning, as the record of 1799 runs, that Washington put the finishing touches to an instrument which had, of late, engrossed much of his time. This was a folio of thirty pages, containing instructions to his steward for the management of Mount Vernon in future years. The whole folio was executed with all that scrupulous neatness and detail with which, in his boyhood, he had drawn up his codes of manners and morals, or, a little later, made out his surveys of Lord Fairfax's estate. While he had

been preparing these instructions for his steward, he had appeared to those about him in perfect health and vigor.

The fair morning settled into a cloudy afternoon, and the next day brought wind and rain, and at night, Washington writes in his diary, "a large circle around the moon."

The next morning, under the threatening skies, Washington mounted his horse about ten o'clock, and made the usual rounds of his estate. A little later, the world was to mourn that he took that ride in the rough weather. Many, too, would remember, with a thrill of the ancient superstition, that "gray circle about the moon." It must have been a long ride, for "about one o'clock"—he tells the story himself—"it began to snow; soon after to hail,

and then turned to settle into a cold rain."

Washington did not turn back for the storm. He wore an overcoat, and he who had spent so much of his youth in wilderness and camp, would not be easily alarmed by the weather. It must have been very wild though, for, on his return to the house, after three o'clock, he thought the storm too severe for a servant to go out with the mails. The snowflakes hung in his gray hair; but he insisted that his great-coat "had kept him dry, and sat down to dinner without changing his dress." Those who observed him that evening could not perceive any ill-effects from the long exposure of the day.

The next morning it continued to

snow, and Washington could not take his usual ride. He began to complain of a sore throat, but, as it seems to have alarmed nobody, he must have made light of it. When the weather cleared, in the afternoon, he went out to mark some trees which he wished cut down. It is a curious fact that the earliest account of George Washington's out-door activity begins with a tree, and ends with one. When he returned to the house that afternoon he had walked the grounds of Mount Vernon for the last time.

As the night came on, the hoarseness, which had been apparent all day, increased. He was very cheerful, however, as he sat in the parlor that evening with his wife and his secretary, and found plenty of amusement with the

evening mails. To all suggestions that he should do something to relieve his cold, he answered, with the soldier's hardihood, "You know I never take anything for a cold; let it go as it came."

During the night, however, his distress became so great as to awaken Mrs. Washington, who wished to summon a servant; but he would not permit this, lest she herself should take cold. No one, of course, realized the importance of prompt measures at this time. No doubt Washington concealed, as far as possible, the extent of his sufferings from his wife. He probably still clung to the belief that his illness was "only a cold."

Day broke at last. The secretary was summoned. He found the General

breathing with difficulty, and barely able to articulate.

By this time the household was awake and alarmed. Physicians were remote from Mount Vernon. At Washington's request, a messenger rode post-haste to Alexandria, for the old comrade-in-arms and life-long friend, Dr. Craik.

Meanwhile, they resorted to the old methods of the time—bleedings and external applications. These afforded no relief. In two or three hours Dr. Craik was at the bedside, with other physicians. New remedies, with additional bleeding, were tried again.

But all efforts proved in vain. From that gray winter's morning it was a swift but sure "descent to death." The iron constitution did not yield without struggles that prolonged the

agony. The light of that brief December day was fading, when the sick man called Mrs. Washington to his bedside. In a desk in his room were two wills, which he desired her to bring him. When she returned with these he examined them, gave her one to retain, and asked her to burn the other.

With this request George Washington seems to have felt that his last work was done. The death that had passed him by on so many stormy battle-fields, had come now, sudden and stealthy, into the peace and security of home. But the strong heart, that never faltered at the summons of duty, that had kept, through its long life, the faith and purity of a little child, did not falter at the last.

There is a touching simplicity and

dignity about that death-bed. It seems a fitting close to the brave, patient, heroic life. Only a very small group gathered in the plainly furnished room —the broken-hearted wife, the physician and old friend, the trusted secretary, and the faithful servant, watching at the foot of the bed.

The difficulty of breathing made the last hours agonizing. From the beginning, any attempt to swallow convulsed and almost suffocated the sick man. His sufferings made speech so painful that he did not often attempt it. But when, a little after sundown, Dr. Craik approached the bed, Washington addressed him: "Doctor, I die hard; but I am not afraid to go. I believed from my first attack that I should not survive it. My breath cannot last long."

The doctor pressed his hand, unable to reply, and retired to the fireside, where he sat awhile in speechless grief.

The strong mind held its integrity to the last. The old courage rings always through the gathering darkness. But it was evident that Washington was tired of the struggle, and waiting and longing for the summons when "he would answer to his name and stand in the presence of his Maker."

Though he uttered no complaint, the dreadful restlessness, the continued inquiries about the time, told, better than words, to the anxious watchers, the final sufferings.

When the other physicians, who had left the chamber awhile, rejoined Dr. Craik, Washington was assisted to sit up in bed. "I feel I am going," he

said. "I thank you for your attentions, but I pray you to take no more trouble about me. Let me go off quietly; I cannot last long."

The doctors continued their efforts to relieve the patient. He was bled four times. His few remarks show his thorough conviction that all remedies were useless, that the last hour was at hand. He said, with a smile, to his secretary, that "he was certainly near his end; that, as it was the debt we must all pay, he looked to it with perfect resignation."

The long evening wore away. Between ten and eleven o'clock Washington's breathing grew easier. He withdrew his hand from his secretary's and felt his own pulse. That act shows the habit of the soldier, as well as the

clearness of his mind at the last moment. The secretary took that dear hand and placed it in his bosom. He called Dr. Craik. When the latter got to the bedside, he saw that a change had crept over the features. He placed the dying man's hands over the cold face. The strong life went out at last as an infant falls asleep.

The next morning, when the late winter sun came over the horizon, George Washington was lying dead in the simple chamber at Mount Vernon.

The disease of which he died—acute laryngitis—had not at that time been differentiated from other inflammations of the throat. His illness had lasted less than forty-eight hours.

Washington's last words were addressed to his secretary, "It is well!"

Nothing could be more fitting the character of the man—the close of his life.

The blow must have fallen with an unspeakable shock upon the country. Washington was hardly yet an old man. It was not unreasonable to hope that long, happy years would find him at the fireside of Mount Vernon, or riding in summer mornings, a noble, venerable figure, among the ancient groves and green pastures of Mount Vernon.

Even now one cannot avoid a regret that death did not spare him for awhile, to reap the fair harvest of so many years of bitter toil and sacrifice; to find himself the central figure in his country's heart and imagination, and to see the young nation, whose liberties he had won, brace her energies for that long career of progress and prosperity,

whose splendor has so far outstripped his largest prophecy of her future.

Yet there seems something fitting in the thought that the life of our Washington and the life of the century in which he had acted his part should close together. For the eighteenth century had a lease of only sixteen more days to run, when the winter morning looked into the quiet chamber where the great soldier and statesman lay in the majesty of death.

In that hour of grief, everybody must have remembered with thankfulness that death had found George Washington at last in the one place he would have chosen to meet him.

The limits of this book do not permit any extended analysis of character. This much, however, may be said:

George Washington is never a perplexing study to the historian. His nature was one of large, simple, massive lines. It forms a singularly consistent, harmonious, well-balanced whole. It has the largeness, the calmness, the majesty, of some ancient statue.

His mind was of an eminently practical order. One does not look to a mind of this type for swift and dazzling exhibitions of genius. The strong, clear, robust quality of Washington's intellect, its large wisdom, penetration, and staying power, were evinced in the most trying emergencies, as well as in all the details of life.

But it was in the moral grandeur of his character that the greatness of the man will always consist—in his flawless integrity, in his large magnanimity, in

his unfaltering patience, and in his unswerving patriotism.

He must have had his faults—his limitations. One is inclined to wonder sometimes how he bore the "crucial test of the dreary intercourse of every-day life." Yet the criticism that detected flaws and weaknesses would, perhaps, have been only that of the valet, who never sees a hero in his master.

It has, for obvious reasons, been much the habit of historians to compare George Washington with Napoleon Bonaparte. The reasons for this are obvious. There were only a few years' difference—as history counts—in the ages of the two men. For a short period the time of their public careers coincided. Each was a central figure in the history of a continent. Each won its glorious

victories, and shaped its political fortunes. But the essential differences in the characters and genius of the two men are illustrated by their ambitions. That of one was to be the Emperor of France—the conqueror of Europe; that of the other was to win the liberties of his country, and to live and to die "an honest man and a farmer."

But when we reflect that the "judgments of time are inexorably moral," it may not, perhaps, appear altogether one of the ironies of fate that the great Virginian should end his days at Mount Vernon, and that the great Corsican should close his life on St. Helena.

George Washington has left the priceless legacy of his memory to America—he has left it, indeed, to the world. The writer of this sketch can think of no

more fitting words to close it than those which a late English historian has added to his portraiture of our first President: "No nobler figure stands in the fore-front of a nation's history."

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